

You have to be a man in this world, and you have to learn how to be a man in this world — and you have to take responsibility. You even have to be a positive person in this world, too. And you have to make sure you are sticking to your dreams or your plans, and stay focused on yourself or on your family in this world, to be a successful person in life.

check out the rest of Gw's POW on page 4



Greetings to you very loyal and not so few anymore, ed note readers, given we post every editor's note on our website too share with the world. Well, well, well, we are happy to be with you all once again this week! The writing in this issue is stellar. We could only wish the world could read what we read from you all. You OG writers are deep! Powerful! Touching! You veteran thinkers keep thinking, don't drop the ball no matter how hard it gets in the coming days, months, years. If you are determined to live a better life for yourself, for your family, for your child, then do it! Don't let any so-called friend tell you otherwise!

This week, our guest writer is the very thoughtful Will Roy. Many of you know Will as the Poetic Prisoner, but in our eyes he is much, much more. Lets give him the floor to share a little of this and that! Will ...!

Hello everyone that's dedicated to The Beat Within. If you're reading this editor's note, you're probably in the 'dedicated' category. Anyhow, for those that aren't in that category they're going to be missing out on some vital information. Trip on the latest lesson I've learned as someone who's trying to make it out here after being incarcerated for a few years.

For the longest time, people have been telling me that a mind like mine's needs to be in school. But for the longest time I've been stubborn thinking that I don't have to go to school to be successful. I can just start working and making money and everything will be okay. Well, with the way things are nowadays, a bachelor's degree is so commonplace that you at least need that to get a job that pays more than minimum wage, unless of course you intern somewhere or take part in an apprentice sort of program. And I didn't want to do that.

However, recently a very good friend of mine got into college at the university level and he's enjoying every minute of it. He tells me about all the wonderful things he's learning and how most of his conversations there give him something to think about afterwards — even the most casual conversations. And when he tells me these things, I can't help but want to be right beside him when he's having these conversations. I'm tired of hearing about who got locked up again, or who got shot this time, or what so and so is doing with so and so. I yearn for knowledge to a point where if I'm not learning anything I get sort of depressed. I feel stagnant.

So as a way to push forward I decided to go back to college. And I want to get into a university as a freshman because I've tried the community college thing and couldn't take it serious. It was almost like going to a high school reunion. Plus, I got the feeling that people there were less serious about education than I was.

I ended up contacting a man by the name of Jason Bell, who runs a program at San Francisco State University called Project Rebound. The program is strictly for formerly incarcerated individuals who are trying to get into college. When I arrived there to meet with him, I was instantaneously struck by ideas and thoughts that are usually bombarded by the daily routine of life outside of school. Not only that, but Jason and the rest of the people in his office weren't talking about who did this and who did that, or what happened at this club or that, they were talking about the ideas they were learning in their classes. It was such a beautiful sight that a smile appeared on my face without me even knowing. All these people that had been right where I was and yet now here they are brushing shoulders with the future leaders of the world. Wait... not just brushing shoulders, but becoming the future leaders of the world. And while they were doing that, they were also sharing everything they learn with each other — a priceless exchange.

Right then I applied to the school and registered to take the SATs. However, they said there might be something wrong with my high school transcripts. They said that since I did most of my high school classes in jail (juvenile hall and CYA), my transcript was too general. When they put what courses I took in jail, they made them hella general. For instance, I took a whole lot of English classes, but on my transcript for those classes it only says "English." What universities are looking for is something more specific like the components of English classes. For example, world literature, American literature, creative writing, essays, etc. But when you go to school in jail, they group everyone together. There's no honors classes or a special education program that's worth anything. Everyone's grouped together whether they have learning disabilities or have always been at the top of their class.

It's a cold set up. They don't want people that have been to jail in college, which made a person like me want to go even more. So, now I have to score high on my SAT's to get into San Francisco State University with my good friend and learn alongside him. I must conquer a mountain out here to do the very same thing I was doing while inside. And that's having intelligent conversations about the ideas of life with the people I enjoy being around. Only in there it's not credited, out here it can get you M.D. at the end of your name.

I remember a saying I read in a book while incarcerated that said, "Below-average minds speak about people, average minds speak about events, and great minds speak about ideas." That saying couldn't ring more true than it has in my life today. So often am I bombarded by gossip that I don't take the time to mull over a great idea. And even if I do make the time, there's no one to exchange it and broaden it with.

The reason I'm writing this in an editor's note is to let the ones who want to go to college know that though you can get your diploma in jail real easy, it's much better to get out and graduate from an accredited high school. They don't want people that have been to jail in college because that's where all the future leaders are. So let's rain on their parade and take over the colleges with some folks that have really 'been there, and done that.'

Right on Will! Right on for stepping up and spitting game on the education tip!

All right, the topics discussed prior to most of the writings in this issue were, "A Fly On The Wall" - Think of the many, many situations where it would be nice to be temporarily invisible. Now with that in mind, explain why you would like to observe the situation you write about being invisible. Can't think of any places you would like to be temporarily invisible, well think about conversations you are not a part of and wish you were. Think about homes, offices and rooms that you wish you could see how people operate, but can't. So, this week we want you to respectfully tell us in what situation would you like to be temporarily invisible and why.

Our second topic, "The Test" - What's the hardest test you have ever taken? What kind of test was it? What did you learn from this test? Did you study, or was it a life lesson/experience? Remember the test you choose to write about does not only have to do with school. You could be tested where you are today. There are many different tests out there and we'd like to know the hardest one you've ever encountered.

Lastly, "Describing The Perfect Home"—What is your definition of home? Is it about the house by itself, or the people that live in it? Your family? Your pets, if you have any? What would be your perfect bedroom, dinning room, bathroom, backyard, etc? Or who lives in the house? What turns a house into a home?

Ok, here's another topic to chew on, before we announce this week's POW recipients, allow us to remind you of our 16th editor's note writing contest! The contest question to consider writing on is, "A Letter To The President." For this contest we want you serious writers to write a letter to President Bush! It is our goal to not only post these letters in The Beat Within publication and our website, but to send them off to the White House too! Now, do we need to suggest topics on what to talk about? Doubt it. So with this said, our contest question is all about you writing a letter to President Bush.

The deadline, deadline will be Election Day, Tuesday, November 7, 2006. As is the case with all of our writing contests, that all pieces submitted will be featured in the BWO (Beat WithOut) section of the "big" Beat over several issues. And once all featured, The Beat editors will read and vote on their four favorites. From these reads, our top-vote-getter will receive a one-hundred-dollar money order. Our second place winner will get a fifty-dollar money order. And our third and fourth place winners will receive twenty-five-dollar money orders. Good luck writers!

On a final note, here's this week's POW (Piece Of the Week) winners, they are Choyce, GW, Jt, Sebastian (writes two), Big Vic (writes two), Ally-bo (writes two) all from the 150 Crew. From SF/YGC we have Poodah and Eritrean Ro Buttah.

All right, simple, this issue goes out to all you POW winners we just announced. Keep doing what you are doing especially if it is leading you to a more peaceful empowering life inside the system as well as in the free world. Lead on and make a difference!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

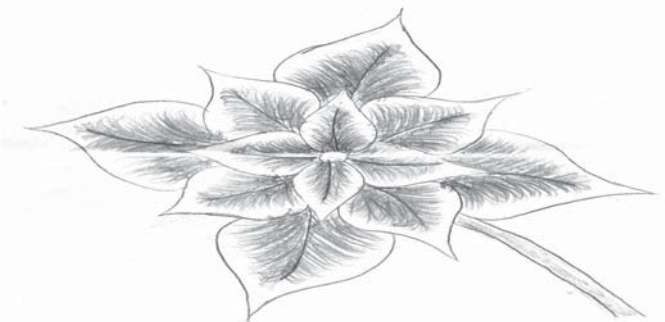
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www.thebeatwithin.org

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Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: This week we welcome the words of Group Counselor Rossell to our pages. He takes our topic of "a fly on the wall" to places we all need to go in our minds — detainees, hall staff and Beat staff, too — everyone who wants to see juvenile detainees sparkle like the diamonds Group Counselor Rossell knows them to be. Only with knowledge, understanding and acceptance of reality, can we hope to "clear away the hard layers" of ignorance, hurt, fear and brutality that hide the shine of their (and our) brilliant hearts and minds.

A Fly On The Wall

If I were a fly on the wall, the conversation I would like to hear would be — the discussion of parents raising their children that are locked up in our facilities. I would love to hear what game plan or decisions are being made for those youth who are due soon to be released. I would listen to those conversations with the intent to understand the family dynamic of each incarcerated youth.

In connection with this, I would listen to the conversations of the district attorney and public defender. I would listen to the conversation of each victim that was robbed, car-jacked, beaten up, molested, shot, stabbed or kidnapped, so that I would understand the full story of each youth. Then I would provide solutions for each youth so that they would grow up to be successful adults.

Offentimes as a group counselor, I encounter many minors that are full of potential and life. The most baffling thing is that I never can come to understand the youth fully enough to provide the greatest help possible. For each minor is truly a diamond in its roughest state, and once you clear away the hard layers of dirt, then you discover how sparkling the diamond can be. As the fly on the wall, I would help the diamonds to sparkle.

-Rossell, 150 Crew Counselor

An Interview With Choyce

(Q = Questioner; C = Choyce)

Q— How long you've been locked up this time?
 C— I've been locked up two months. Doing this little time, facing big time.
 Q— What's big time?
 C— I'm putting my life on the line, looking at twenty-five to life, if found guilty. I'm in for attempted murder.
 Q— How did it get to this point?
 C— Not listening, doing what I want to do. I can't blame no one else. I can only blame myself. They all tried to help me.
 Q— Who tried to help you?
 C— People like The Beat Within.
 Q— Take this back to your younger days in West Oakland.
 C— When I used to be on the block, I used to always think about death or doing life in prison, 'cause that's the consequences when you out there doing whatever.
 Q— How did you become addicted to the streets?
 C— I got addicted to the streets once my mom passed away and I thought the streets were all I had, with my dad.
 Q— Tell us about your mom and her love for you.
 C— She told me the truth and never lied, always told me to go for whatever, and I chose the wrong way to go when she died.
 Q— What were you like before she died?
 C— I was just a regular ba-ba-kid, going to school, going home to my family with my sister and brothers.
 Q— How old were you when she died?
 C— I was thirteen. I heard she died when I was coming home from Roosevelt Middle School. My dad told me. She died from alcohol. I didn't know what to do. I was lost for weeks. She died three days before my birthday; so on my birthday, I just smoked it out.
 Q— We're sorry you lost your mom like that. What about your dad?
 C— I have a good Christian dad. I'm his only son.
 Q— How come your dad couldn't save you from the streets?
 C— Because he saw the pain that I was going through, going to jail like my six brothers.

Q— What was your first case?
 C— Receiving stolen property. From there I caught three dope cases. I ran from four placements. I graduated from Camp Sweeney though! I was free out there for nine months, and then caught an attempted murder charge.
 Q— Looking back, is there anything that could have saved you from sitting in this max unit tonight?
 C— I could've done a good program like Camp was trying to help me to do, but I got out and forgot everything they told me. So I just kept doing what I was doing before I went to Camp.
 Q— How do you forget everything, knowing what you know?
 C— The streets was eating my conscience up. They kept calling me back, and I let them fool me into doing wrong again. The karma came back on me.
 Q— Are you mad?
 C— Yeah I'm mad! I know I could have done better, but I can't be mad at anyone but myself, because I had a lot of help that I threw away. But all I do now is pray to god that I get better.
 Q— How do you see yourself?
 C— I see myself as a good person that was doing evil things and good things at the same time — but it don't work that way.
 Q— Hey, could we continue this conversation next week?
 C— Yeah, for sure!
 Q— Any final words for the younger generation reading your interview?
 C— You got to be careful, and pray to God for better days.

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We remember you days at Camp Sweeney very well. We remember all the adversity you met, both at Camp and on your home visits, that you faced like a man, stood up to and overcame. We remember how you said no one thought you could make it through the program successfully because none of your brothers before you had made it through — but you did! The one thing that was missing was a clear plan on how to put money in your pocket legally after your release, and when you're walking around with empty pockets, the temptation of picking up some of that so-called easy money on the street seems to come at you on every other corner. We say "so-called" easy money, because it seems to come easy, but you end up paying further on down the road in totally unexpected ways — like that attempted murder charge you're facing. It's so hard to explain to most what you clearly know, that "getting away" with doing wrong, brought this upon you by putting you square in trouble's way, till one day, you just couldn't dodge it. You've got one of the biggest hearts we've ever seen. We hope you get another chance and use it fruitfully.

Basically, I want to better myself for
 me, and if not for me, for my son.

When I get Out

When I get out I wanna get my life together because being in this place is not cool at all. When I get out I will get my education to live a better life so I can provide for my son and show him the right path to follow. I want to be a good role model to him.

Basically, I want to better myself for me, and if not for me, for my son. When I get out, I also want to not end up in here. This is my first time and last time.

-Poodah GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There is a lot we like about this piece, but what we like most is that you not only tell us this is your first experience here, but also your last! That's the kind of determination we like to see. It's good that you are changing for your son. You know that he will do what he sees you do (and not what you tell him to do), and so changing for him is important so that he can grow up in a healthy environment. But it is also important that you know you are changing for yourself, too.

In This World, In This Life, Thing To Do

You have to be a man in this world, and you have to learn how to be a man in this world — and you have to take responsibility. You even have to be a positive person in this world, too. And you have to make sure you are sticking to your dreams or your plans, and stay focused on yourself or on your family in this world, to be a successful person in life.

But you don't have to do these things. You can make a choice for yourself that you don't want to be a good and successful person in this world, in this life, of yours. And I'm just saying this because I never knew I had to be a successful person in this world, in this life of mine, until I was fourteen years old, when someone else gave me some of thei' right mind of game and knowledge.

What I'm saying is real. So just understand, and one day, you are going to be a man. You just have to stick to it, so you and your plan can come true. And one other thing you have to do in life, is always pray, every day and every night.

-Gw, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for writing such an inspiring piece and for lacing our readers on game just the way someone once laced you with knowledge and understanding of what it is to be a man — a man takes responsibility in his life and in his world to be a positive role model, not only for others but for himself, too. All those who think they can keep on the same old wrong way, and then suddenly switch from negative to positive when they're ahead of the game, are getting played by their own minds.

Cheating, Part Five

Ding-dong, came the sound of my front door bell, and I thought to myself, "Who the hell is that at my door? Don't nobody really know where my other house is at — and it's raining outside!"

Then came the sound of someone knocking on my door, so I shouted through the door, "What?! Shhh."

She said, "It's me."

"What the freak?" I said, opening the door. "Why are you so wet?"

"I stayed out here all night."

"Are you crazy?" I asked, staring at her standing there dripping wet. "Come in. Please."

"Thank you," she murmured gratefully.

"Just go take a hot shower and put on something dry."

"Baby, I —," she started to say before I cut her off.

"Don't! I'm not in the mood right now."

"Sorry."

She went to take a shower as I had suggested, and while she was in there I said to myself out loud, "I don't know what she is trying to pull ... but ... it's kinda working. Then again," I added firmly, "it's not."

"Do you mind if I make something to eat?" she asked me after she was showered and dressed.

"Not at all," I answered.

"So ... what do you have planned for today?" she inquired.

"I'm staying in and watching a couple of movies I rented the other day."

"Ohhh," she nodded.

"You can stay if you want," I found myself telling her.

"No I can't."

"No, fo' real."

"Are you sure?" she asked, looking up at me.

"Yes."

"Thanks for everything," she said, nearly bursting with gratitude.

"Let's just start the movie," I said, embarrassed by her display of emotion.

"Okay." Then just as we were settling into watching the movie, I heard a loud ass kicking at my door! "Who is that?" she asked me, as if I knew.

"What the freak? I don't know!"

"Go see."

As I walked to my door, I looked through the peep hole — and I couldn't believe my eyes! [To be continued.]

-Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We have to confess, we're glad to see the wall you built around yourself, or, that is to say, the yourself in your story, crumbling a little. It makes us wonder what might happen next. And then you leave us wondering who is kicking at your door and why? It's like one of those weekly serials they used to show at the movie theaters, always leaving the audience wondering what's about to happen and wanting to see next week!



it feels like the longer
my rap sheet gets,
the less credibility I
empower myself with

Forgive Me

i want to escape this hell i'm in
forgive me lord for i have sinned
damn where do i begin
i've been thrown in the deep end and cannot swim
destruction in this world is causing havoc
but sometimes the victims just had to have it
crimes are hard to break like a habit
and hard to catch like a rabbit
but when the rabbit got the gun
it ain't no fun
first thought is to turn and run
how can there be light if there is no sun
i cannot see the way without a guide
my first option is to hide
catch my enemy in stride
then wash him away like a low tide
some call it chaos, i call it life
death's by any weapon from gun to a knife
forgive me lord for i do wrong
temptations are hard, that's why i write this song
in my head i have many thoughts
seeing the body of my enemies rot
did the crime then got caught
right in front of the school parking lot
it actually could've been worse
felt possessed like i had a curse
couldn't control myself, my body did the thinkin'
i seen the evil's eyes just winkin'
forgive me lord for i fell into the trap
of the evil spirit, fell right through the crack
now i got to get up, i gotta escape
before i hit them prison gates
that ain't my fate
i got time, it ain't too late

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You were living under a curse, as your life went from bad to worse, and that perverse pleasure that comes from running with the devil, had you filled with the spirit of evil, whether you felt powerful as all hell or paranoid and surrounded by enemies as well. It is just like a habit, an addiction, and you lose control over yourself, losing the truth and believing in fictions — you knew the lies you were telling your mother, but the lies you told yourself were the ones that took you under. Now you're more than halfway toward making your escape, just by knowing you want to change your ways before it's too late. Meanwhile, the poems you write are a powerfully inspiring map, showing others just where the real truth is at.

My Guarantee

(I guarantee that this here is Piece of the Week!) I know it's only two things that I'm promised, and I'm only certain that one of the promises will be kept. One of the two is death, because no matter how unstoppable I think I have become, I will still be fated with death one day.

The other promise I might receive, is liberty — or liberation! I was told that I have equal rights in America, but it feels like the longer my rap sheet gets, the less credibility I empower myself with. Therefore, what I am planning to do when I get out, is be a part of the real world, in a real way, so that I receive what I have coming to me — my forty acres and a mule!

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: At a time when, what is the statistic that gets thrown around — one in four black males in the U. S. of A. is, or has been, incarcerated — well, it might be high time that same U.S.A. finally came through on its promise (speaking of promises of liberation) of those forty acres and a mule, or, maybe today it should be four years of college and a guaranteed job! We're not saying the choices you made before your most recent incarceration are deserving of being rewarded, but we do believe that a lot of bad decisions are being made out of a sense of economic necessity in a more or less dire financial situation, where food and housing, which is to say, basic necessities of life, are increasingly hard to come by. Compensation for slavery, the residual effects of which are so clearly still with us today, most notably in the neo-slavery of the current prison-industrial complex. How long must this go on? We ask you, and we ask the larger American society, too.

The Truth Hurts

Hey, what's up, Beat Within? It's me, Smiley, from the county of Marin

I'm a start off by sayin' I ain't tryna diss or hate
I'm just gonna lay the truth out, won't hesitate

I respect everyone for the poems they create
But most of them writings are not true, they fake
Like when they promise moms they gonna change

They just lying and playin' childish games
And that shhh true—it's almost on every page
Talking about "I want to go home, I want to be free"
But the first thing you do when you out is smoke
some weed

Or go back to the 'hood and kick it wit' your fake
homies

'Cause your homeboys don't got your back
Suckas start to run when guns start to blast
I swear they run faster than fast

And to them homeboys, writing poems to their ladies
Come on, homies, you know she got something on the
side

You must be crazy
'Cause nowadays females be stayin' sucka free
And homeboys be actin' all scary

But the truth is—you gotta change, not only
physically, but mentally
Because without the mental part, you won't make it
out on the streets

You'll just end up behind these walls made out of
concrete
'Cause actions speak louder than words and I want to
see action

Don't just do half a fraction
Change for your moms and take her out on vacation
Instead of always waiting for her at the police station
And this goes out to all the people in Da Beat
I got mad respect for you

But you can't say what you can't do
Can't say I'm not right, 'cause it's true
And it's coo' if you ain't tryna put me in The Beat
But this poem is better than Piece Of The Week
So don't hate, 'cause the truth hurts, G
From your boy "Smiley"

-Smiley, Marin

From The Beat: This poem is fabulous, Smiley! Yes, many youth, not all, in juvy front, brag, pretend they're more bad than they really are. We hope they read this piece as many times as possible and get the point out of it. Are you speaking from experience? What inspired you to write this? This is one life you all should be living, not wasting it. If you all don't make an effort in opening your eyes and seeing what reality is made of, you will suffer the consequences later. So, what's after this piece? What are your plans for the future? Are you going to become real this time? Or will you still mess around? What? End up your piece please.

I Am the Future

I wonder to myself, who can really be defined as a star? Because, to be honest, I see my own self as a very important person. Are you defined by what others think of you? Or are you what you know you have been through and are doing now?

The world through my personal vision, revolves around me, because — I am the future! When others congratulate me on my successes and criticize me for my shortcomings, they only open my eyes even wider to see that I am a star! Like 2Pac, I am also a rose that grew from concrete.

I've grown up within these institution's concrete walls, and I have blossomed into such a beautiful and creative person. And even if my thorns may stick others who try to misuse me, I still have an amazing purpose in life. I am a rising star!

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are the star of the story of your life, 'cause there's nobody else that can be you! And if you can't be there for yourself, to put yourself at the center of your story and give yourself what you really need, how can you give anyone else anything in life? To be there for others, you have to be there for you. Wherever you are, if you stand in one place and simply turn yourself around on a pivot, you see the world spin around you — it's just the reality of each of us having our own individual point of view. If you plant a garden around you, you'll be at the center of a beautiful place — it's all in what you choose to do, 'cause no one else can stand in your place.

What Really Helped Me?

I used to have a girl I really cared about and loved, a girl that was always there for me, a girl who I dreamt about every night, a girl I couldn't stop thinking about, a girl I would call to other girls her unforgettable name, a girl who practically wrote to me every day when I was locked up, a girl who always said, "I love you" after every time we seen and left each other, a girl who forgave me for my mistakes, a girl I could spend my life with, a girl who, when I let my guard down, took it for granted and back stabbed me. I should have seen it coming, but I hesitated for too long... I guess there are three things I think of it.

One: "Everything happens for a reason.

Two: "That's life."

Three: "Maybe it's all a dream."

It took me at least six months to stop trippin' over it, but the last time I got locked up, it was probably the forty plus days that really helped me realized I needed to move on. I mean, I "definitely" moved on, but it was just always sitting there, eating me away slowly... Come to realize I don't know if it was just the forty plus days in the hall that helped me. Maybe it was the three 1/2 to four months in the hall that helped me, the binge drinking, all the weed I smoked, maybe it was all the time I was spending on the streets, doing dumb things like car hopping, or maybe all the gurls I've hooked up with since then...

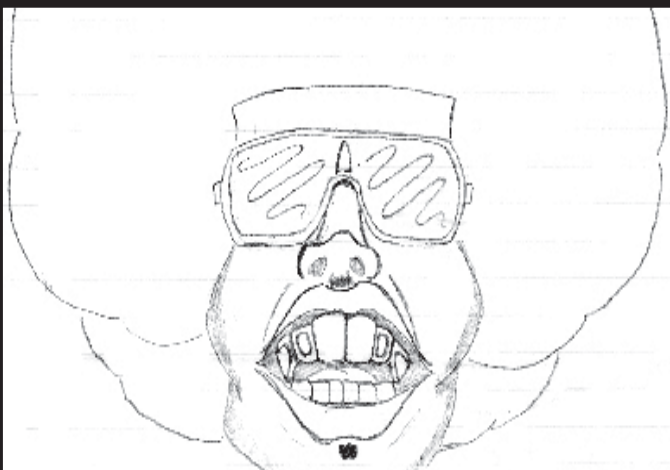
So now I'm going to Residential Treatment, so I won't be doing all those things while I'm up there or when I'm finished with residential, (any more)...

I'm kind of scared, 'cause now what am I going to do about this "disease" that this guy, maybe some, maybe most, maybe all guys get from these so-called beautiful creatures—women?

It's not going to be easy, but I'm going to do my best, without those things that got me caught up... What I mean by those things can mean whatever—disease, girls, drugs, crimes, whatever gets "you" caught up...

-Playa Joey, Marin

From The Beat: This is by far the most thoughtful piece you've ever written for The Beat. We knew you could do it. At least in this piece, you're looking at all the things that could be messing with your head, your freedom, and your life. A good suggestion will be that if you get the chance to finish your program, to do whatever is possible to do everything well. Use this time to educate yourself, to make plans, to view different things for a better future. Whether you come back or stay outside, it's on your hands.



Love and Respect Myself

i used to have a chipped tooth
my tennis shoes got holes in the bottom
same turf clothes i wore all week
'till grammy said i could wash 'em
mommy at highland hospital
blood clot in her leg
didn't want nobody to spend the night
'cause i peed in the bed
kicked outta continuation schools
i'm livin' a fool on knees prayin' for change
'cause i don't know what to do
sistah ain't much older than me
and got a boatload of kids
swore i nevah get one preg'o
'till i handle my bizz
i done lost dozens of loved ones
and i don't cry no more
if i pour out some for ones gone
it would be the whole store
come to think, most of my patnas
done sat in a cell befo' we eighteen tho'
one thang above all
love and respect myself
'cause if i ain't got it for me
than neither does no one else

-Chaz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you turn your words to biographical matter, the sheer force of your writing shatters all deceit, and you seem to make truth into a warrior standing on two feet. There's no shame in the pain we've felt in the past, 'cause the only shame is choosing to make pain last longer than it needs to last — pain is required in life, but choosing to suffer just isn't right. When you can't go on the way you're going, and you don't know how to stop, that's exactly the right time to drop to your knees and pray for God to show you a better way — just start living it today and don't look too far ahead. Just do better every day, and while perfection will never come, necessary progress will be made toward that better day that sometimes seems so far away.

Done With This

Man, y'all know who I be, Young Stub. I been doing this shhh for a long-ass time. Some of y'all know me. If y'all don't, then forget you 'cause it's time for Stub to move on with his life. I am sick of keep coming back to this place now I am about to be a man, so I will go to the big house. If I do something else, now I have to think for myself an' do what's right that's gone help me out in life for me and my baby.

For the ones that don't know, Stub have a baby on the way and a wife. It took me a ling as time for me to feel this way. How I feel now I have a life. Now that block shhh not for me no more. The people you call your homies is telling on you. I have a lot of homies in the feds for people we was thinking they was our homies.

But for my young homies, it's time to grow up an' stay out 'cause Young Stub is done with this shhh.

-J-Stubba B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're so glad that you've finally grown so tired of this revolving door that you've decided to walk out and never walk back in! Being a father (not just creating a baby) is probably going to be the hardest thing you've ever done — but also the most rewarding. Since the block is what you know best, how are you going to wean yourself from it? What are you going to put in its place? Will you go to school? To work? Both? What are your plans?

The Perfect Home

The perfect home is my house full of love, full of life being around my grandmother, taking care of her and playin' with my big brother sittin' on the porch. This place I'm livin' in now ain't for me.

I just can't wait to go home and hug my granny. I might not let go I love her so much. I can't wait to see my room full of speakers, TV, DVD's. My room is big. You can throw a party if you wanted to.

You never know what you got till it's gone. I get it back when I go home. Prey to God I get out within this month.

-Zackrina GU, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What we like so much about this piece is that your perfect home isn't about how rich it is, how many bedrooms you have, if it's a penthouse with a swimming pool or not. You recognize that the true treasure is those you love and those that love you, and it is those people who make a house into a home. Good for you for knowing that. Now that you know what you're missing, what are you going to change on the outs so that they never take you from your grandmother again? We know you'll get out soon, and then it's up to you to see whether you can keep your freedom...

I just can't wait to go home and hug
my granny. I might not let go I love
her so much.

A Fly On The Wall To Hear Government Lies

If I could be one spot at a certain time it would be to be there at the meetings where the attacks on 9/11 were planned. Most people say it was terrorists. I think they just aren't looking under the blanket of masterminds.

I've always believed that nothing of that measure can go on with such a simple reason as terrorism. Think about the attacks — two planes to the Twin Towers and one to the Pentagon. Now the one that was supposed to hit the White House crashed in a field because the people rebelled. Either that happened or the person behind it never planned for it to hit the White House, but it damn sure made the story more believable.

Now the attacks gave the U.S. reason to go to war, a war against terrorism. But when they couldn't catch Osama, they decided to go for Saddam in the name of "The War On Terror." But with Saddam and the Middle East came a much bigger plan — oil!

The U.S. is in control of Iraq, therefore they have influence on the oil and controlling it. Now all of a sudden oil fields there are blowing up, prices of oil go up. They say there is a shortage in oil. Proof says that is a lie and a scam for money. But still prices go up. Now the oil field in Alaska has a problem and prices go up. But most overlook the fact that a oil plant of that magnitude must be checked daily for problems so that it is fully functional all the time.

All these things tie to oil, money, and a much bigger picture. I wish I was there to hear the plan behind all of this 'cause nothing in the government just happens by accident or acts of terrorism.

-Wal B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This well-written piece tells us that you like to read about the world, and that you're interested in politics. Do you think the U.S. Government knew about the Twin Towers and Pentagon plan before it happened? Some people argue that some in the government actually plotted the attacks so that they could go to war. Is that what you believe, that the "masterminds" of this "act of terrorism" are actually our own so-called leaders? There is one problem with your analysis, which is that oil prices have been steadily going down in the last month or so, despite the War and the Alaskan pipeline disaster. How do you account for that?

Mama?

Mama, why do you cry?
 I see the pain in both your eyes.
 Mama, why do you weep?
 Has all life's troubles made you weak?
 Mama, why do you shed tears?
 I can see demons feeding you fears.
 Mama, why won't you stop sobbing?
 I can see your veins athrobbing.
 Mama, will you take this tissue
 And dry the tears from your hidden issue?
 Mama, please will you share
 The troubles you find so hard to bear?
 Mama, why can't you see I care?
 I'll mend the place where your heart did tear.
 Mama, will you ever let me go?
 I fear if you do, I won't be able to grow.

-Mark B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a beautiful, loving tribute to your mom, Mark. As much as you clearly love her, she must be very proud of you because you have shown that you want something better for your life, and that you want it for her as much as for yourself. Since we can see you growing with every week's contribution, we have to conclude that your mama has no plans at all to let you go. She knows what you're worth!

This Relationship

See my days are cool without you
 But I'm hurting while I'm with you
 But when my heart can't take no more I keep on
 Running back to you...

Have you ever loved someone, who didn't love
 You the same way? It hurts so bad, you cry all night...
 So you do everything you can, anything you
 Think will make him stay... but you know
 He ain't your one, you know the relationship not right...
 So you running, running, hiding from the
 Truth, pushing and trying to force it away...
 But your lying to yourself, his lies get you
 Higher than a fiend hitting a pipe...
 LOVE AINT WOTH IT

-LaLa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a great piece! You talk about living with the knowledge that a relationship is toxic and what those lies can mean—really excellent writing. As far as the relationship you're talking about, we hope you take your own advice and stop running from those truths.



The Biggest Criminal

This biggest criminal in the world is the government. First they go and take people away from their families, sometimes for no reason. That's like kidnapping. Then they keep you in and want you to pay outrageous amount of bail, or ransom. And they plot to lock you up, that's a conspiracy.

They do all these things and yet they never put a foot in a juvenile facility, county jail, or a state pen. But we commit the smallest crime once, and we go down for a long time, but yet they do it constantly, every day, and ain't never looked at no jail time. But they still say that we're the criminals knowing they ain't no better.

-Yung Bird B4, SF/YGC

From the Beat: Those who make the rules (laws) always find ways to get around them! We agree with your analysis. The government gets away with major crimes that you would go to prison for if you did them! A hundred years ago there was a labor organizer named Mother Jones who said that if you steal a pair of shoes, you go to jail, but if you steal an entire railroad (company) you go to the U.S. Senate! But unfortunately, this doesn't get you off the hook. Since the system is set up to catch the low-level offenders and leave the big fish alone, then it's up to the low-level offenders to stop offending if they want to stay free... Unfair? Yes. But true? Also yes...

Crazy Anger and Pain

it's the anger inside
 that makes me ride
 you see a smile
 but i'm in denial
 the only thing that holds me
 is when i listen to oldies
 i don't know why
 but i cry at times
 i think about the past
 and hope my life lasts
 my childhood was crazy
 it seemed like my parents hated me
 mom was too young to understand
 that her boy was 'bout to be a man
 she really didn't see
 and my dad was gone in the penitentiary
 they'd do the craziest stuff ever
 and they'd think i wouldn't remember
 i still think about it but i try to forgive 'em
 it still really hurts though and i want to hit 'em
 how i lost my mind, my grandma left forever
 her face and her voice i'll always remember
 after that, i didn't give a what
 i wanted to go up where the stars struck
 my pain was real crazy
 so i drank beer and smoked a gang of weed
 i'd snort coke and "ride till i die"
 that's another reason i lost my damn mind
 i really need help, as you can see
 but i don't really care, 'cause no one can help me

-Shagy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Whether we call you Shagy or Angelo, there's on thing we want you to know — there is only one person who can really help, and that is you yourself. We hope you meet a counselor at Camp you can trust and talk to, or maybe a homie who sees the same dead-end that's facing you and wants to change his ways before his chance is through — just someone you can talk to, who wants what's really best for you. It actually helps to know you've lost your mind, but only so long as you don't use it as an excuse to act out your rage and pain like you're blind. It's time for you to be that loving parent to yourself, time to take your grandma's love which can never die in your heart and tell yourself what she'd want to see you do to make a new start — and then do it. Don't let your pain bring you more pain on top of it. Man, we know you've had enough of it. So now it's time to really put in work, not riding for the 'hood but looking out for your own good.

Going, Going, Gone

You never realize what you have, until it's gone. I mean, you never know when something will be gone! It's like you may wake up and the person next to you could be dead. Or something you have or even something you cherish, could suddenly be gone, and you'd wished you would have appreciated it more while you had it, while it was there for you.

Take your family, for example. They're the people you love and care about, and they're the people who care and love you more than anything else in the world. Yet one day, one of those people you love and who love you, are going to be dead and gone! Then you are going to wish you said or did something more for that loved one back when you still could.

So, you should always live everyday like it's your last, because tomorrow is not promised to anybody. Nor is anything you have today promised to be there for you tomorrow. So take advantage of every day, every hour, every minute, every second — because it could be your last.

-Rodrick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for expanding on the meaning of live everyday as if it were your last day — with! — your last day with a loved one, or with some object or photo or whatever that means a lot to you but you may forget to stop and appreciate while you have it. However, most especially, with beloved family members, show them your love today, share time today, and plant those warm and loving memories in your heart forever, even beyond the grave.

Break Away

what tests have i been through in life
tryin' to survive in the streets every night
carryin' guns, see the cops, have to run
sellin' drugs, in the car, consider ourselves thugs
but always gotta watch my back
because anybody could hit me
with hot bullets and make me bleed
soon as i pull it, i gots to make a choice
either kill him or let him speak his last voice
that's the hardest test
to take a person's life or let him keep his last breath
i gots to be a man
to back down from all the human slayin'
but it's hard because i see it every day
everywhere i go, everybody gots an ay-kay
but i gots to break away from this test
because i don't want anybody to take away my last
breath

-Ally-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got to break away from the grind on the street if you want to beat this killing spree that's knocking so many young men off their feet — and women and children and old men, too, getting killed by bullets that travel through walls and windows and passing cars, till no one's safe from thuggin' feuds! You've got a daughter out there who needs you, and we all need leaders to show the way off the killing streets to see a better day.

you should always live everyday
like it's your last, because
tomorrow is not promised
to anybody

Hatred

It all started when I was 10 years old. I would always wear a lot of black and people would dislike it, mostly gangbangers.

I would always get into fights because of the way I looked.

As I grew older, I started getting used to the sensation of hitting somebody, especially when I got mad at somebody. i could not control my anger because of the strong feelings I had inside me.

To be honest, it was hatred, the hate I had for the people that messed with me, the hatred I had for myself for not doing something to better my life, and also the hatred I had for my father for not being there for me. I just developed a lot of anger as the years was passing by. It's hard holding in your feelings when you went through hell in life.

One thing I could not stand is people talking shhh to me because I am quick to act in a violent way. That part never left me.

-Lil' Bb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece digs deep — deep into yourself and the dark forces inside you that got you into trouble. It's crazy how that vicious cycle happens, right: Anger = more fighting = more trouble = more to be angry about and then it just snowballs out of control. So now where do you go from here? You have all these things you've been through, and now you need to figure out a way to control your emotions. Is anyone helping you with that? Is there another way to express them without the hate and violence? Because you have too much going for you to let that hold you back. Too much love, too many loved ones hoping the best for you and backing you in this struggle.

Education Prepares us
For Tomorrow....

I'M NOT EVEN
Ready For Today!



Real Talk

if i never came to the hall, i'd probably be worse
i'd either be on one or riding in a hearse
'cause it hurts when you out there livin' broke
gang bangin', dope slangin', snortin' lines of coke
livin' in oakland really ain't what it is
we in the danger zone, and we just a bunch of kids
but i really should thank these weak police
for takin' me in savin' my heartbeats
'cause, man, the murder rate goin' up like a rocket
it's nothin' we can do, nothin' that can stop it
real talk — i'd rather not be in the hall
but if it saves my life, i'll take a three-month fall
when i'm free, i gotta get mines together
live my life right, so i can go wherever

-Real Talk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are spitting truth that makes you sound like the living proof that there's hope after dope. We hate to see you take a fall, too, but if this is the beginning of a new you — then all we have to say is major props and be coo'. Plus the murder rate will start droppin' when more follow you and stop coppin', slangin', and bangin' — 'cause living life free is everythang, man!

Too Much Pain Bring A Lot Of Stress

Now I know the reason why ghetto youths live in pain
Sustain

So they never stay settled, always on the run
Lookin' for food, gotta get it done
A lot of people live by the gun
Some eat with it, take a shower, even sleep with it
Do they know how we're living?
No

Take a trip down in Kingston, Jamaica
Check the life of living
It's different than America
Something similar, similar to Africa
24-hours

Shot rings from the high power
City counselors don't give a damn
They're the one who friends us up
Set us up

Pretend like they care for us
Then let poverty invade us

-Dean, Marin

From The Beat: Your poetry always intrigues us. You often write in general about the ghetto and how the kids who are raised up there suffer. Can you compare specifically what ghetto life for you was like in Kingston and any city that you've lived in in the US? How has poverty, violence, prejudice influenced you, your family, your friends? What do you think can make things better?

Do You See The Little Ones Who Are Crying Out For Help?

I wonder if you got a heart
You're only for yourself
So selfish

Yeah, things are changing
Drive-by shootings
Babies screaming
Transit cops will be crushed
Lose their guns
Blood running through the streets
Like Harlem

You may catch it on TV
Black culture in the street
Straight back 'til morning
Talking about survival
Breaking the lies
That enslave the mothers an' the fathers
Let me see your combination
Come together
People, they bring abomination
Pagans—the people of Satan
Will never hold us down from freedom

-Dean, Marin

From The Beat: Beautiful, sad poem about the tragedy in the streets. Whose fault is it, do you think, that the violence is getting worse and why? What can be done to make it better? What form do you believe Satan takes when he influences people to go wrong? How do you ward off Satan when he tries to lead you in a way you know would be harmful if you followed him? Keep on writing.

*The Beat
With Me*

My Turn

When I go home, I'm home. I get to talk to my mom, my brothers, my nieces. I don't have to worry about watching my back or get caught slippin'. I just feel safe at home.

When I get out of here I'm going straight home. I going to be with my family. I need to take care of my family. It's time for me to get off the streets. I talked to my mom today and she's sick. I have to take care of her. She took care of me, now it's my turn to take care of her.

-Nacho B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope you follow your own plan Nacho. You're right, it is time for you to start giving back to your mom. She's sacrificed a lot for you, so now it's your turn to sacrifice for her. We know that if you find a way to stay with your mom and not come back to the hall, your life is going to be a lot better!

She ended up becoming pregnant and she
turned the whole situation around and
claimed she originally didn't want to,
but was pressured.

Home(s)

The homes that I have stayed in are all hell-holes, with people fighting everyday and police knocking at the door everyday. Because people out there are selling drugs all day long, every minute, and then somebody comes through shooting!

And I know that someone I don't know, has a key to my house! Someone has a key to my house, and they can open the door. They can come in anytime they want and take anything that they want! What I'm saying is — that's what it feels like when the staff comes into my room here whenever they feel like it.

-Lil' Miami, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice twist on our assumptions of what "home" means, 'cause you're right that for many of our readers and writers, the Hall (group homes, etc.) have been the homes they've known best. And you begin to feel not only powerless to protect what's yours, but also feel you have no safe place to be, which is what your room in your house is supposed to be.

My Best Friend

About 2.5 yrs ago, my best friend tried to be with my ex-boyfriend. I ended up getting locked up and she was supposed to be helping me out here by being a good friend and updating me what was going on with him. She ended up getting kicked out of her apartment and my boyfriend let her stay in the spare room.

I should have never let him do that. They ended up getting together, his sister told me when I got out. She ended up becoming pregnant and she turned the whole situation around and claimed she originally didn't want to, but was pressured. I decided not to talk to either of them, and one day I went to take the bus to my appointment and saw them together. She was supposed to be my best friend and I cared about him.

-Charlotte, Durango/Maricopa Arizona

From The Beat: Sounds like you were stabbed in the back and heart. We hope you won't give your heart again to someone that you feel has to be watched. We also hope you realized that these people do not sound like friends or people who care about you. You made a great decision by deciding not to talk to either one of them again. You deserve to have friends in your life that will treat you with respect and people you can trust.

Far, Far Away

the perfect home for me
would be far, far away
because this jail will never be home
and it's only gon'
to get worse as i get older
the perfect home to me
would also be a big house with my family
and all my folks that's cool with me
even though i can't swim
i would like to live by a lake
because of the peace
that would be the perfect home for me

-Fatboy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can see you walking by the lakeside in the peace and quiet of nature, looking over your shoulder at your house filled with the people you love and who love you. Get up out the game, 'cause that life is insane and leads to more pain.

Describe The Perfect Home

Home is where the heart is, like I know you might hear that all over the place but for real though... You can live from telly-to-telly but that ain't yer home! Trippin' off this and that 'cause you livin at the Hayward... nah.

A home is four walls that you come back to day after day(for longer than a week), somewhere you feel safe! Somewhere secure, clean, comfortable and you can sleep 'till after checkout. Where you spend time with the one you love and you learn and grow together. Memories and make believes are filled. Family can come visit and you be proud to show em: look! This is ours! We did this! We made this work!

I think I failed to mention this, ain't no home with your moms and dad... 'cause we already had a perfect home with them and I thank 'em, love 'em for that but this is a home for you and the one you love. You and your man or woman yo' feel me! It's your foundation of your fresh start... right 'cause I feel you need that reassurance to be able to grow yo know?

-Ney, 150 Crew

From the beat: That sounds like a true home, and one that you'll have to really work for, that would be worth working for. We hope that someday soon you'll be writing us from that dream home instead of from juvie...

Life Is Gettin' Crazy

they want to give 'im life wit' no bail
my life's turnin' into a livin' hell
'cause what happens to him affects me
i'm goin' crazy, that's my family
he didn't do it though, they got the wrong one
on top of that, they find 'im wit' a gun
i been in here two months, then came vee
my cousin almost got killed but he back on his feet
my homie dark came in for a strap and some weed
and on top of that, this had to happen
i can't stop thinkin' 'bout ridin' and slappin'
but man, life is gettin' crazy
i stop sometimes and think about changing
but it can't happen, not where i'm from
'specially when you walkin' around holdin' a gun

-Shagy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The first thing to do is get rid of the gun. We know it's scary to walk in your world unarmed, but in the end carrying a gun will do you equal or more harm. It's like carrying an invitation to get caught up and brought up on charges, and you may be charged with more than packing a gun — you may be the fall guy for some serious action. But then, if you choose to keep riding around, looking for trouble in the town, sooner or later you will get clowned, by a bullet to your crown or spending years on lockdown. Especially because of where you're from, you have to change, and show the homies there's a better way than self-destruction and moral decay. Turn the pain to gain, start to change.

The Hardest Test Is After My Release

The hardest test for me, is to stay on the legal path once I am released. For instance, if I go back to "the hood", will I still be under surveillance by the federal government? Will I still be sidetracked by the life of fast money, cars, girls and drugs? Will I still be the same ol' shoot-'em-up bang-bang gangster?

The test is given to those who have the capability of passing. I believe that to pass the test, I have to study the in's and out's of the world (economy), so that I can survive and be a successful rapper. I feel like I've done everything but died, so all I can do is live right and pass "the test"! I hope that you pray for me and keep me in your hearts as I undergo a crucial life style in CYA for one year. I'm gon' hold it down, fo' show!

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know you'll be in our thoughts and prayers, but you have to add the legs to our prayers and your own. That is to say, pray as if it all depends on God but act as if it all depends on you. Also, we recommend you broaden your career search beyond the rap/music industry. As you say, study micro- and macro- economics if you can, and see that there are so many more and varied successful business plans for a young black man of intelligence and ambition. Work on furthering your education at the Y, and get some job training, too. Even if it's a trade you don't want to do for the rest of your life, whatever gets you up off the street and puts some money in your pocket will be key to keeping you out of lock up after you're release from the Y.

It Ain't Grimy

I'm tired of all these little-ass boys in here talking 'bout YGC so grimy. The halls ain't grimy. Wail till y'all get to the pen.

Why all y'all tellin' the judge, "Oh, my mama a dope fiend" or "My daddy used to beat me"? Do you really think they care? Let me tell ya'll what grimy is. Grimy is when your mama is a dope fiend and you sellin' dope. Instead of helping the damn problem you makin' it worse. Grimy is when your daddy beat you, you run away and are livin' on the street getting girls pregnant, then beat your kids when you could have got help.

I'm really tired of y'all thinking y'all grown men. I met this boy at court and he was trying to get with me. I told him "No, I'm grown". It turns out he was younger than me, so ya'll need to shut the hell up!

-Young Snow Biznes GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well put Young Snow. You really broke down the definition to the word "grimy." But you also put your finger on something else — boys tend to mature slower than girls, so you're generally looking at the picture through more mature eyes than your "boy peers" are. Give them a little time. They might catch up to your thinking after a while. (We hope they realize what you already know before they go off to those truly grimy cells they have waiting down the line...)

The Test

I'm about to face the biggest test in my life. And that test is for my own good and the score I get on my test determines which way and what path that my life is to take. Lately I haven't been on the right track but I plan on changing that because I made real big choices in my life. One of them was having sex and that's a very big one.

The other was even bigger it was not protecting myself and the result of that is now I have a seven month old child and that leaves the biggest test of my life taking care of a child.

-Lil' Son Loves Malaysia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You sound mature, thoughtful, brave and ready for this test. What do you wish for your child? What kind of life do you want your child to have? What kind of life do you want for yourself?

The Phone Call

i just finished talking to you
now i'm not feeling all too cool
i got tears in my eyes
my heart feels like it's 'bout to die
the sound in your voice says it all
that things have changed since i've been in the hall
i hope my mind is playing me for a fool
because i think our relationship is almost through
i hope to god for our baby's sake
that my love and time you did not forsake
i know that time changes things
i hope you have not forgotten about your invisible ring
i'm sorry about this situation
when i talk to you feel intimidation
i can not sleep for one whole night
i wake from my dream with terror and fright
i know that you will never cheat on me
but how soon will your love begin to flee

-Dreamer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We join our hopes to yours, 'cause a child needs a mother and a father for sure, and it's so much easier when love holds all together in a family unit — when foul weather comes, it helps everyone get through it. Separation by reason of incarceration is never an easy thing for a family to do, so all we can advise is that you stay patient and don't let your fears run away with you. Even if she's feeling doubts, be there for mother and child when you get out.

Most of these staff are just here to do a job, even a great job, but when they say they care, they are just pretending.

"We're Here to Help"

Everyday I hear most staff say, "We're here to help." But you need to remember that they get paid to do that. The truth is there is nothing in this world just free.

Also staff gets paid to lock us up. Basically, staff gets paid for everything they do in this institution — and they get paid for everything they don't do in this institution. And that is the reason why so many detainees don't really respect staff when they say they really care about us. Because if they really cared about us and wanted to help, they'd find ways to help us get out of here instead of trying to keep us locked up.

I always notice that most staff is always trying to give advice to us about staying out, but if they are really so concerned, then why don't they keep in touch with us on the outs and help us in those times of need that we have to survive. My guess is that they don't do it because they don't get paid to do it. See what I'm saying, y'all?

Most of these staff are just here to do a job, even a great job, but when they say they care, they are just pretending. I can't blame them, 'cause if I was getting their checks every two weeks, I might be the same way, too — but I never will. Man, money makes people do the strangest things. Like Pac said, "Even though we all came from the same places, money and the fame made us all change faces."

-Lil' DeTay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: At least three places in the Bible (Deuteronomy, Paul's Second Letter to Timothy, and the Gospel of Luke) it says, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." So why are you hating on staff for getting paid? Granted that showing up for work doesn't prove that any individual staff person truly cares about the detainees he or she works with, but neither does the fact that he or she gets paid prove that any given staff person is only pretending to care. As for why they don't look you up on the street to try to help you out, they really can't get caught up with former detainees in the street who might be holding illegal drugs, or be strapped with a gun, or who knows what mischief. On the other hand, you might argue that the system, or the society that pays for it, doesn't really care enough about juvenile detainees because it doesn't provide programs to help youth survive and do right after their release from juvenile hall. We need more help in our communities for at-risk youth, absolutely true! Meanwhile, give respect where respect is due.

Sittin'

as i sit in this room
wondering what i should do
to make that time go by like
it never existed in my life
what do i need to do
to make my dreams come true
i will never be a square
with only worries and cares
in this life to make it all right
as i sit and i sit
i realize just worrying 'bout life ain't it
but i'm still locked up and can't get out
so what do i do
sit and daydream about the outs
dream of me doing me out and about
but when i go to the door
locked is all i'm seein'
so i scream in my room for my freedom

-Baby Doll, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel your desire to be free and the frustration that comes your way daily. But you need to do more than daydream about doing the same old same in a cruel and losing game. Square up enough to stay free when you walk out the gate. Use this time to prepare yourself mentally, make a plan for what is meant to be: a wiser Baby Doll, giving freedom her all. Quit, go legit, and that's what you'll see!

My First Love

i have my first love
he's so cool
and i think it would be amazing
to have someone to love
it is so beautiful
that it is a dream come true
and i never had dreams come true
until i had my first love
he is so amazing
it is so amazing to be loved

-Audrena, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Feeling accepted and loved for who you are is a wonderful feeling indeed. However, even if boyfriends come and go, when you learn to accept and love yourself, it is even more amazing to see by what you know, how much you can grow!

One Big Family

the perfect home for me
is living with my family
and my two pit bulls
because we are one big family
because everybody
has love for each other
and that's what makes
our house perfect
and what makes a house
into a home
we have house parties
and barbecue parties in the backyard
and all the family be having fun
that's what makes my house perfect
peace out beat
this is yo' boy lil' sam
god bless everybody

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Love is the glue that holds a family together, whether barbecuing and having fun in the backyard in summer weather or weathering a storm in its heart while you're locked up and kept apart from the others you love — you define the perfect house and home in what you've written above.

Home and What I Would Like It to Be

Right now, I live with my mom. My dad lives in San Francisco. I love to live with my mom, but I don't like that I can't leave my mom to live with dad.

I think that's why I do the things I do, like rob people, because I don't have my dad with me! If you don't have a dad, you will understand what I'm saying without me having to explain. It's like the only time I see my dad is on birthdays and at court! So maybe that's why I get in trouble, you know, just to see my dad.

-Cody, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh man, that's so sad! Is your mom so mad at your dad that she won't let you stay with him, say, Saturday night and Sunday, or maybe every other weekend, Friday night to Sunday night? Why? You should talk to your mom and dad and make them both understand that you need two parents in your life, whether they get along with each other or not. That said, stop using your dad as an excuse to mess up your life. Just start doing right, 'cause your dad will still be your dad for the rest of your life, and you'll have a life time to get that father-son love right.

Home is Paradise

To me, home is paradise (or it should be). My dream house would have three floors, first, second, and an attic. It would have three bedrooms and three bathrooms. A kitchen, a dining room, a living room and a fireplace. It would also have a washing machine room. It would have a front yard and a backyard. The front yard would have a lawn with two trees and lots of flowers. It would have a garage (enough space for two cars on the inside and two cars on the outside.) There would be a pathway for the cars to go to the backyard. The backyard will have a swimming pool, enough space to play soccer and a shed. I don't think there's anything else to ask for.

In order for the house to feel like home, you need family. My whole family would live in the house. As for pets, I would have two dogs and three birds (a cockatoo, a cockatiel, and a dove) I would have one snake and fishes. I don't really pay attention to the details but when the time comes, for me to add those in (that is, when I really buy a house like that.) I'll think about it then. Now this house is only a dream -- I hopefully will be able to make my dream come true.

-Guillermo, 150 crew

From The Beat: Dreaming is where it starts. Once you know how. Now how do you suppose you will make this dream a reality? We're listening.

A Fly On My Father's Wall

If I could be a fly on a wall or invisible anywhere, it would be on a wall in the past and present of my father. I have only met my dad two times out of 16 years. He was in and out of jail and prison during my childhood. Now he is also in prison, eight more years.

I want to be on his wall to see what he choose to do with his life instead of raise me. I would like to hear the excuses he has why he left me. I still am very concerned about making him a part of my life, but he is more willing to be a father when he is clean and done with his criminal lifestyle, so, by the time he gets out, I'll be old enough to understand more.

-Maile, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: There are so many absent fathers in The Beat that it seems like an epidemic to us. We don't know why your father chose to satisfy his own needs when his real job was to be your father. Maybe he has a drug problem that he never dealt with. Maybe he was just too young to know how to be a father. Maybe he was just selfish. Do you have any relationship with him now? Do you write to him? Does he write to you? Have you ever asked him directly why he made the choices he did? What do you think he would answer?

Invisible

I would love to be invisible if I'm with some friends and they start to tell me about something you can do to get a lot of money. If I'm invisible, then I won't have to listen and I won't have to be with them.

It's not that I don't like my friends, it's just that I don't like to get locked up — it makes my pops feel bad! Yet I have to get money for my little sister, who lives with my grandma. So the times that I do get locked up, I just tell Pops what the money was for and then he understands. He knows I'm a family person and that I'll do whatever it takes to feed and help my family, even if I have to go to jail.

I would love to have the power to be invisible if I could cut it off and then cut it on, because I would never be locked up! It's not like I would do a lot of bad things, but I would do some to get what I need when I need it.

-Amos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What you say sounds almost reasonable, almost heroic, like going to jail to feed your sister. But now that you're in jail, what can you do to help her? And it might seem cool to you that your dad forgives you for jail time when you tell him it's for family, but that doesn't make it a good decision, and we bet he still feels bad that you're locked up, and so does your sister, and your grandma, too! Why not get some kind of a part time job to help her? That's all you would need to do, and then you would be out and free at those times when she needs not just your money but you!

My Son

I want my sons future to be cool, easy and good. I want him to have everything I didn't. I want him to live his childhood and enjoy everything, not feeling like he has to rush through life and hurry up and do hella shhh, like i did. I want him to go to school and college so he can be successful. I want to be able to let him know from experience that this thug life shhh sometimes ain't cool and always ends up with bad results. But it's really up to him and what he wants to do. But I hope and pray the best for him.

-Ray-Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have to do more than hope and pray. You have to make a decision — now — about what kind of man you want to be. Because you are the person that little boy will look to when he's trying to make his way in the world. If you feel like you don't know how to be a father, that means you need to find a mentor, or a program, that will teach you what fatherhood is all about. He's depending on you to teach him how to live, but if you stand up and meet the responsibilities of fatherhood, you may just discover that he's the one teaching YOU how to live. Peace. Let us know if there's anything we can do to help.

I Miss . . .

i miss chillin' wit' my homies
i'm in here wit' a bunch of phonies
i miss chillin' and drinkin'
but i'm in here hopin' and thinkin'
i miss them days in the varrio postin'
i miss them days ridin' oakland and smokin'
i really miss my girl
but she probably gone to another world
doin' only god knows what
while i'm here sittin' on my butt
i miss partyin' at night
i miss gettin' into dumb fights
i miss all them dead nights
i miss bein' on the roof until the next day
smokin' weed and pates, up off of hella yay
i miss them days and that life never in fear
but that's what the hell got me up in here
i miss my mind 'cause it's really gone
and that's why i do nothin' but wrong

-Shagy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Time to reclaim your drug-addled brain, 'cause the life you're missing really did make you insane. You can use that as an excuse to continue down this road of self-destruction, or you can make a conscious choice to change direction. 'Cause if you continue to "do nothin' but wrong" — next time you get sentenced you will be long gone. Really you're lucky to be at Camp, getting this second chance. Don't blow it off, or it'll be your loss.

My Every Day Life

What's good. Man, this is my every day life, what I do every day, or mostly every day.

First I wake up around 9am and smoke a blunt to the neck, then roll another one and wake my lil' brother and my lil' sister up and smoke wit' them. My lil' brother is 16. Well, 17, now but my lil' sister is 14. I stay smokin' with the fam, but my little sister just started in '06. Well really smokin' big in '06 'cause then she would hit the blunt 3 or 4 times and would be out of it, but she be blowin' now.

I let my little sister smoke wit' me cause her potnas smoke and I would let her smoke wit' me before her potnas cause people be on other shhh. It's just like with my mama. She started smokin' with me because she didn't want me to go there and smoke with somebody else and not knowin' what's goin' on and not on the streets. So I did the same with my little sister.

After we smoke, me and my lil' brother and sister would go get something to eat, then wash up and hop on the phone to see what's good on the turf, then call some females and see if they ready to mess with us. If so, we go mess with them, then meet back up with my lil' brother ...and we in the wind, all through town like this: get a dice game, buy some weed, smoke again, then whack the dice game or get whacked in the dice game. If I whack, go get a pill, get a 15 dollar bottle of 1800, and get on and try to start another dice game. But if I get whacked then it's ugly, cause once I start shooting dice and I lose some of my money I can't walk away unless they break me and my brother, cause we be tag-teaming, feel me. So if I get whacked me and my bra get on one, and strip somebody, and be right back in the game or sell a bag or something and get back.

And the night comes and we call some females, mess with them and my ninjas all night until like 1 or 2 am. Then we go back to the house, get back on the game, smoke and listen to some Mac Dre, feel me? Go to sleep around 4 or 5, 'cause it takes about an hour or so to get to the house, then wake and basically do the same thing: smoke, eat, cut to the streets lookin' for a dice game, or something.

I don't really mess with parties like that 'cause a ninja have his own party with the fam. Some girls, hella grapes, drink, pills, and no problems, feel me?

-Byron, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There is so much in this piece, we almost don't even know where to start. First off, the amount of detail and effort you put in this piece is great. We feel like we have a window into your life, and we can see how much you love your family. You have a heavy responsibility on you, trying to keep your brother and sister safe in a cold world, and it sounds like you're the man of the house...And the fact that you watch over them, and plus wrote five pages back to back about them, just shows how much you miss them. Here's the tragedy though: You're trying to help them, but you're really hurting/destroying them. You're doing with your brother and sister what your mom did with you, trying to keep you from the street danger by giving them weed and keeping them in the house. So if your mom does it, you must think, then it's OK. But actually, without wanting to, you're poisoning two of the people who love you the most. They look up to you and follow your lead. Weed is a drug that makes pain and stress go away, doesn't? Or at least it feels that way. But just like the thrill of that dice game, it distracts you from doing what you need to do to make it in this world. The drugs, the drink, the pills, they're as dangerous to your family in your house as out of it. They keep you out of school, they keep you from going to programs that could help build your future, they're illegal so they leave you open to the police, and they're trapping you in a dead end path. You know those little hamsters that just race and race in their treadmills, running as fast as they can but getting nowhere? Is that what you want for yourself, or for the people you love? You write each week, and you write well. You deserve better.

Unhappy New Year (Part 3)

Well, one week after my mom died it was the funeral. When it was the funeral, it was more than 100 people that came. Some people that I hadn't seen in years, and I was happy that they came and showed my mom respect. Everybody was crying, including myself.

The funeral was an open casket, and when I went to see her I couldn't believe she died. And it was the last time I seen her face.

Man I miss her so, so much. And also the funeral was in Sacramento.

The people that know my mom went up and made a small speech about how she was to everybody and when my Auntie went up (my mom's younger sister) I had never seen her cry so much, like this, and I could feel her pain, and her sadness in me. Then an hour passed and we burnt her. Then after that we went back to my mom and dad's house and went to finish the ceremonies of there. Then me and my uncle and cousin got together and started to talk about my mom. And all night I cried, and people told me it's gonna be OK., because my mom is in a better place and she is lookin' down on our family and watching' me and my family's back. And hopefully I'll see her soon someday.

Well that's all I got to talk about. And if I say more, I'm a start to cry just for writing, and thinking about it like I am right now. And she died at a young age. At the age of 28.

RIP Mama, March 10, 1976 to April 16, 2005. Love you and miss you, me and all the famila will never forget you. Love you, mom.

-Ronnie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your mother's life touched so many people, and that grief is a sign of how much she was loved. As you write at the bottom of this powerful piece, writing about it is a hard thing to do, but the fact that you faced your sadness in order to honor her memory for these pages is something she would have been proud of: A heart still capable of tears is also a heart still capable of great strength and courage, and we know you've faced many struggles since losing her... you will have more struggles to face as you fight the system and the demons inside you, but your love for your mother, and your memory of what SHE would have wanted from you, are your secret weapons in the face of the battles to come. Best of luck, remember her love, remember her hopes and dreams for her boy, and make them come true - for her.

Where I'm From . . .

I'm from Oakland. When I was a kid I played football because I'm older and taller. Oakland isn't cool. It's not safe to walk through neighborhoods because you don't know what's gonna be happenin' at that time.

Family makes the world go round.

One of my patnas just got killed going to a party. He was walking through the streets to a party in another neighborhood some dude just walked up and started bustin'. Then my friend ran the way the dude was shootin'. The dude probably thought he was runnin' for him, so he shot him in the face.

When people say they want the violence to stop it ain't gonna stop. People like it: poppin' pills, getting high, girls doin' it big.

I like it when we have parties, dancing with females. I ain't gonna lie I like it. But not when people start shootin' at the crowd. The pills be havin' their heads messed up. People think they're earning stripes under their belts.

-Dennis, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great job breaking down the situation in Oakland for Beat readers. Why do you think fun crosses the line into violence so much? Is it just the pills, or something else?

A Fly On The Wall

A situation I would like to be invisible in would be when George W. Bush is having a top secret meeting that he wouldn't want anybody to know about. I would want to be in one of those meetings because you could see and hear what they are talking about or planning for the future. I would like to take a little tape recorder or a video recorder camera to show the whole world what they was saying or how they was acting in a certain situation.

-Lil' Nicoya B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Boy, you don't know how much we wish you were that fly (with your recorder and video camera) because we'd like to know the real skinny, too!

Messed-Up Life

First off, let me introduce myself. This is the homie, Soldier.

My life seems so messed up. My relationship with my grandparents is all goin' downhill. I seem not to get along with them. They just always talkin' negative to me. They be sayin' I'm a loser and shhh — sayin' I'm no good! I don't let it get to me.

The only person that I have in my life is my baby'mama. She's the one I go to when I'm feelin' down. She hella cares 'bout me. She hella loves me. I love her, too! We been through hella stuff. She's the only good thing in my life that makes me happy. I'm a stick wit' her till my body goes six feet under.

All right then, Beat, I'm out for now. 'Till pencil meets paper. Alrato.

-Soldier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Don't give up on your grandparents too soon, because even if it sounds like they've given up on you — it's just the pain showing through. Maybe they just can't stand up to anymore disappointment. The thing to realize is that when you change, and stay changed, they'll come back to seeing it's safe to trust and love you, and that's when they'll show and you'll feel it, too. Meanwhile, thank goodness you have your baby'mama in your life. All in all, it's high time to start doing right — and that means Soldier has to stop living a soldier's life 'cause his child needs a father free and alive more than a soldier locked inside or — "He died."

RIP Cell

This shhh still ain't easy, gon' through this pain and being in this predicament doesn't help any. I need some answers. I wish I could be out. I wish I could celebrate his birthday, but instead I'm going to be in YA.

Why did he have to get hit? Why did he have to die to the streets of Oakland?

My ninja was livin' his life too good. It wasn't time to go, we all miss you bra -- damn, it is so hard to accept your death.

I have so many nights in my room just thinking about you, just trying to find out what went down that night. I just want to understand why my closet friend had to die, why did he have to be another statistic, why couldn't you be the one to make it? You was supposed to be in yo' twenties, just havin' 'money, why couldn't you see yo' daughter grow up? No it's so many questions, not enough answers.

Why does it have to be this way? Damn, our ninja really is six feet. His heart will never beat again. His dreads will never shake again. We all miss you bra. Rest in Peace: Marcellus Halley aka Cell

-Lil' Naud, 150 Crew

From The Beat: YOU are what's left of Marcellus now. You and the other people in his life. So the only way to make his life mean something is to grow strong and tall and show his daughter that there is another way to live. When we say "step your game up" that's what we mean: Find a way to step up your game so you can live a life worthy of honoring the best that Marcellus meant to you.

Life Is A Test

You think life is easy, but life has a lot of struggles and hard things you have to go through day by day but life can be beautiful if you make it that way and stay away from negative things. If you have a positive attitude and positive people around you will be okay. Just keep your head up and stay strong.

-Charlis, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That is really great advice. How do you stay away from negative things? Does it mean living that positive existence in your soul and bringing it with you wherever you go, or does it mean sometimes that you need to change your physical environment and find new places to be and new people to be with?

I Need The Beat

Hey Beat I need y'all! I need you guys to help me out with a job. I'm tired of being on the streets selling drugs and robbing people and houses just to get some money so that I could get the things I need or want. It's time I get a legit job, one I can't get in trouble for, one I feel comfortable and relaxed with, and one where I could go to and not be worried about getting shot at 'cause of some drug deal or robbery I didn't do to someone. So please help me Beat because I'm ready to be legit and change my life. I need a real job to do when I get out. I could be doing right!

-Lamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Call us up when you get out and we'll help you as much as we can. Your optimism and attitude are impressive, and will get you 90% of the way.

Wantoo But Can't

I wantoo change.

But I can't!

I wantoo be no longer a boy but a man.

But I can't!

I want and try to stay out of jail

But I can't!

'Cause something is holding me back

Not knowing what it is.

I desperately try to find it

But it's hidden so well that

I wantoo but I can't!

But one day I'll find it

You wait and see

(I'll have it!!)

No longer it will have me.

-Loo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You will become a man, and you will get out of jail someday. You will and you can! But what you do with it is the question. We think you're thinking about it right, so just keep focused on what you want.

The Bible Changed My Life

When I get out this time I am going to do what I got to do. But when I was on the outs I was doing what I was supposed to do I was going to school every day and I was doing good and I was on time. Life is so heard sometimes when you're in jail, but just pray and have faith in God. Cry unto Him, believe in Him. He will help you get by in life.

But people be lying so much about nothing. When I get out I pray that I go home an' stay home. I know that I am going to stay home because I have faith in God that He will help me make it, and He will be with me. I know He will be 'cause I am a good young man that read the Holy Bible. I read it because I need God in my life for good.

The Holy Bible changed my life around. I pray two times a day, when I wake up and when I go to sleep, and God hears my prayer. The reason why I pray is that I need help. I need to get me life together for me an' my mom. I know she need me and I need her.

Without my mom I don't know what I would do with out her. That's my life. But I disrespect my mom a lot an' she don't deserve that at all. I wish I can take all that back but it's all good. I love my mom to death and I know she love me too. I will not disrespect her again. With the faith of God I believe I will do right.

-Gregory B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're glad you're finding both comfort and guidance in the Bible. It has helped many young (and old) people to get through difficult times. It is said that "God helps those that help themselves," so how will you help God to help you? We hope you have a real plan for how to "do right" that includes respecting your mother (as you have promised to do) as well as going to school to prepare yourself for the responsibilities of adulthood. Thanks for this piece.

Dear Mama

This song, "Dear Mama," always meant something to me, since the first time I heard it on 106.1 KMEL. Tupac was always a role model in many different ways. "Dear Mama" reminds me how strong my mother is. I feel Tupac was a strong individual. "Dear Mama" is a great song.

-Olay, Marin

From The Beat: Tupac's "Dear Mama" seems to mean a lot to many kids and adults too, who know that their mothers have suffered and are struggling, often alone, to raise their children. It is a beautiful, sad, moving song. Even if your mother is very strong, doesn't she need you at home and your help? It is time for you to start showing her love as she has shown you. Right?

In My Way

There are lots of things standing in my way. The main thing that's standing in my way is me. I can't help it. I've been here lots of times and I still seem to come back. Some other things in my way are friends, weed, girls and punk kids thinking they can fight me. I should have just walked the other way. One other thing in my way is probation. They should just let me do my thing and chill.

-Big T, Marin

From The Beat: How are girls, friends, smoking grass in your way, affecting you? If they mess with you, is it because you let them. You have the strength to not go along with them to prevent trouble coming your way. Have you thought about how you can fix this problem? Because if not, you might get into more serious problems that you may regret later.

An Interview With James About Mac Dre

James: I'm not writing about 2Pac because I'm not from the Jungle (Marin City). I don't know him personally, but I'll write about my ninja, Mac Dre.

TBW: You're from Vallejo. Did you ever meet Mac Dre when he was alive?

James: Yes I did, plenty of times. My cousin, Dubee, rapped with him. Dubee still raps for Thizz Entertainment, Mac Dre's label.

TBW: So what was Mac Dre like to be around?

James: He smoked grapes a lot and cracked a lot of jokes. We posted up on my cousin, Dubee's house--Mark and Griffen (streets) on the Crest. My cousin was lifting weights all the time in his garage. We used to post in the garage. His garage got a couch, TV, weights, Play Station. Dre would sit on the couch and play Play Station with my little cousins, my auntie' kids. Ninja stay crackin' jokes all the time. We used to go to the Crest with the Crest Creepers. We used to go to Mac Dre's concerts. We used to be up in the thizz vans--with airbrushed posters of Mac Dre in them.

TBW: Who do you think killed Mac Dre? And why?

James: When Mac Dre was in Kansas City, they wanted him to perform a concert, but they wasn't tryna pay him enough, so he said, "Forget y'all. I ain't doin' nothin' if you ain't tryna pay me." They left in one of the thizz vans. Somebody pulled up on the side of them on one of the freeways. They hit they car with a kater (machine gun). The car went off the road and hit a tree while Dubee was driving--that's how Mac Dre died--from the impact of the crash. But my cousin was okay. Ninjas from Kansas City killed Mac Dre.

-James, Marin

From The Beat: A whole lot of people miss Mac Dre. You've told a good story about him. You're one of the few in our Beat workshops who knew Mac Dre personally. Have you learned anything that has changed your life from knowing him? Has his music influenced you? How has the way he died affected you?

A Perfect Home

A perfect home in my eyes is one that is filled with love and support.

A house with people who boost your morale when they see that you aren't confident.

The material objects of what the house is made of doesn't necessarily matter

as long as it ain't falling apart.

As long as there warm food to eat and warm blankets to sleep

with there's not much more I would ask for,

having grown up in poverty myself

I only ask for what I need

because greed keeps getting me here in juvenile hall.

-Young L, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Tell us about this greed. It's not just you, it's a lot of us who get caught up in greed and it leads us down the wrong roads. Shine some light on greed for us wise one.

This Girl

I really liked this girl. She says she has my baby but I really think it is a maybe

But now I am behind bars with twenty-four-hour guards.

I really only remember her nice face, I gave her flowers in a vase.

She said she loved me but I thought it was fake love.

I am thinking of the Lord above

And You may really think it is nothing but love

But the next thing you know

Is hearing a knock and then the police are at your door

-Ryan, Durango/Maricopa Arizona

From The Beat: Love can be powerful especially when it is not there anymore. If you are unsure if the baby is yours, take a test and you will know. If it is, will you take full responsibility? How you prevent possible pregnancy in the future? You will have other chances to know love in the future, you do not need to rush into it, especially with the wrong person.

Treating Strangers

We treat strangers better than the ones we love because we already know that our loved ones have taken us and put through so much. So when we run into strangers we wasn't to give them a fresh point of view of us and have a good first impression.

I think that meeting someone new is like taking another adventure and when we meet these strangers we grow fascinated with where they are taking us so we start treating them with a lot of respect, a lot more than our loved ones so I think that is why we treat strangers better than those we love because we get so excited with the adventure the stranger is taking us on.

-Victor, Durango/Maricopa Arizona

From The Beat: We have to remember to not take our family and loved ones for granted. We can learn something new everyday from our family and improve our communication with them. There are many adventures that can occur with our friends and family. If you have hurt your family in the past or they have hurt you, its better to try and improve that relationship rather than constantly starting new ones.

I Don't Know What's Wrong

My father never did much good in my life and when he died, I could only stay angry. I still don't know how to handle him being gone. I only know how to get loaded. I'm trying to take care of myself, but I can't when I don't know what's wrong.

-A young son, Marin

From The Beat: Maybe it's normal to remain angry at your dad, now that he's gone, especially since the two of you never got to be close, but that must hurt you terribly. Getting loaded doesn't help, you know that. Do you have other family members you live with or can live with? Maybe what's wrong starts with your grief that your dad has died and you won't have another chance to try to make things right with him, and that is so sad and tragic. You have our hearts.

The Beat Within Interviews DB about Biggie Smalls

I don't want to write about Tupac, I want to write about Biggie Smalls. Before Tupac started rappin' gangsta rap he was with Digital Underground, so that's why he ain't real.

TBW: What did Digital Underground rap about?

DB: "The Humpty Dance," "I Get Around," and a song dedicated to females. It was that it wasn't real.

TBW: So you think his conversion to gangsta was phony?

DB: Yeah, phony.

TBW: So you don't think kids can grow and change their vision of life? Get interested in other things?

DB: Yes they can. Me, myself, I would like to learn a lot more about African American history.

TBW: So when you go to school, you don't learn much about Black History?

DB: Even during Black History Month, we don't learn much about it. We learn more about Christopher Columbus and Englishmen conquering and taking other people's land.

TBW: Tupac wrote about that, too, about how there were two paragraphs in his history book about slavery. And about how they never teach about modern day slavery people are suffering now.

DB: Everybody who works is a slave, if you think about it. But I'm not too interested in Tupac, but I think Biggie Smalls is real.

TBW: Why Biggie but not Tupac?

DB: Biggie is real because he talks about packin' guns, shootin' guns and going to hell.

TBW: Because that's the way his life really was?

DB: Yes.

TBW: Do you think Biggie ever killed anybody?

DB: If he didn't kill someone, he shot somebody in LA. I saw a documentary. They didn't show that, but they talked about that that, though. You got NYPD and LAPD—two of the most wicked cops (departments) in America. It's like the two feet in thing. You can't have two feet in two things. You've gotta ride one thing to the end. You can't be good and thugging it and tryna go to school, because it's not gonna work.

TBW: If your heart's into both, why can't you do both and see what has more strength in your life? See what pulls you?

DB: When somebody see you about to go to college, they're gonna get you.

TBW: Why?

DB: If it was me and I was beefing with him, and he was tryna go to college, I'd do the same thing. The only reason why I'd do that is because you gotta fly straight or you can't fly at all.

TBW: Doesn't it depend on how heavy your funk is with this guy?

DB: It don't matter, because you can't have one foot flyin' straight and the other foot not flyin' at all.

TBW: What if he's trying to do both?

DB: By doin' both, you don't wanna live. You playin' with fire—you're eventually gonna get burned.

TBW: Do you think the way Biggie lived was okay?

DB: It was more than okay, it was fabulous.

TBW: In what way?

DB: In a thuggish, sick twisted kinda way.

TBW: One that you respect?

DB: Yeah, I respect it because he didn't wanna fly straight, he didn't want to fly at all.

TBW: What did he want to do?

DB: He just wanted to stay on the ground, 'cause it's real.

TBW: Is your reality like that?

DB: You could say that in a way, except the sick and twisted stuff. Me and his life is nothin' the same. I just like his motto, because I don't wanna fly straight, I don't wanna fly at all.

TBW: Why not?

DB: Because I'm gonna ride to the very end.

TBW: What do you mean, "ride to the very end"?

DB: The dead end.

TBW: Why dead?

DB: Because everybody dies in the end. Some people's dead end comes faster than others'.

TBW: Sure, everybody dies, but don't you think life is worth fighting for? Isn't your life worth fighting to keep?

DB: Yeah, but if I die, I die.

TBW: Do you think the life you're living is dead at heart?

DB: Yeah.

TBW: Why?

DB: 'Cause the life I'm livin' is a dead end, but I'm gonna live it to the fullest.

TBW: But you don't seem dead to me. You seem really alive?

DB: I am.

TBW: So why do you describe your life as dead?

DB: Not dead, but I don't see no choices. It's only going one way. I love violence.

TBW: Violence you see, know about, or violence you create?

DB: Both.

TBW: Why?

DB: I don't know. I've been that way since I was ten.

TBW: What happened to you when you were ten?

DB: I don't remember. But that's the way (violence) my life is going.

TBW: You don't want any other alternatives? Any other choices?

DB: No.

TBW: Does that mean that you're going to end up in prison or worse?

DB: (shrugs) Maybe.

TBW: What could you do to change your life so you won't end up there or dead?

DB: I don't know.

TBW: You're not going to try, when you're free again?

DB: I don't know.

TBW: Why do you think Biggie Smalls died?

DB: He had a lot of enemies.

TBW: Do you think Biggie was funkking with Tupac?

DB: Yeah.

TBW: Do you think he shot Tupac in Las Vegas, after the Mike Tyson fight?

DB: No, he didn't shoot him, but he put the order out.

TBW: Why?

DB: I don't have no facts about it, but what I do think is that LAPD and NYPD put an order out on 2Pac and Biggie to start a West Coast/East Coast war. But that could be invalid, too.

TBW: What makes you think that?

DB: Because Biggie and Tupac's rivalry was gettin' too big and people was choosin' sides.

TBW: So the rap world—East Coast/West Coast—was breaking down?

DB: If you killed both leaders, nobody would now what to do. It's like cuttin' both chickens' heads off. Everybody would be runnin' around, not knowin' what to do.

TBW: And it worked?

DB: Yes, it worked.

TBW: How did it work?

DB: 'Cause now you got two of the most popular rappers dead. Mike Tyson told Tupac, "When you gonna stop the life you been living?" Tupac didn't give him an answer.

TBW: Do you mean Tyson told Tupac that the night he was fighting Evander Holyfield in Las Vegas, the night Tupac was killed?

DB: Yeah.

TBW: What do you think Tyson meant when he told Tupac that?

DB: I think that meant that Mike Tyson was givin' Tupac a warnin', because throughout the whole thing, Tupac used to be scared of Shug Knight, because Shug Knight really bought Tupac.

TBW: How?

DB: By bailing Tupac out of state-to-state penitentiaries.

TBW: So Tupac owed Shug Knight?

DB: Yeah. He'd be in jail if Shug Knight hadn't bailed him out on that rape charge.

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TBW: So you think Shug Knight had something to do with Tupac's death, too?

DB: Yeah, because Tupac was gettin' all large, and Shug Knight thought he made Tupac. Created Tupac.

TBW: But Shug Knight was driving the car with Tupac in the passenger seat, after the Tyson fight in Las Vegas, the night Tupac was shot.

DB: Yeah.

TBW: Why didn't Shug Knight ever tell who shot Tupac? He must know. He must have seen whoever drove up next to him and shot into his car and killed Tupac.

DB: Maybe he set it up.

TBW: But Shug was shot also, that night, when he was driving with Tupac in the car after the fight, but Shug survived.

DB: Yeah.

TBW: I've heard that, that maybe Shug had something to do with Tupac's death, and we saw it in "Resurrection," the documentary about Tupac.

DB: Yeah.

TBW: So Shug Knight was jealous of Tupac?

DB: Somethin' like that.

TBW: Also, isn't it true, that Tupac had threatened to leave Death Row records, Shug Knight's label, and take all his copy written music with him?

DB: I think so.

TBW: And if he did, Shug wouldn't have any rights to Tupac's music?

DB: Yeah.

TBW: And if Tupac died before he left Death Row, Shug would get all the rights to Tupac's music?

DB: Yeah.

TBW: Is that what happened after Tupac died? Shug got the rights to Tupac's raps? Because they were on his label?

DB: I think so. Yeah.

TBW: But didn't you say that you thought that Biggie Smalls put out a contract on Tupac? Do you think Shug Knight and Biggie Smalls were in it together? Trying to kill Tupac?

DB: I think the LAPD, the NYPD set it up, to fire up the East Coast/West Coast rap war.

TBW: So do you think the LAPD was working with Shug Knight to get rid of Tupac? Some people think that Shug Knight grew up in LA with lots of guys who became that special Ramparts unit of the LAPD and had some of them on his pay role. That he paid them off to set it up or at least look the other way.

DB: Yeah. I think the LAPD set it up, let it happen.

TBW: Whatever, that sucks. That's dangerous for the whole rap world.

DB: Yeah. Whatever.

-Db, LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Maybe we'll never know for sure who killed Tupac and Biggie and how it really went down, but with Mac Dre dead, it seems like the situation in the rap world is very precarious—potentially dangerous for everybody, when people start dying behind the creation of music. Some blame the violence in some rap music, others blame the streets, lack of good, well-paying jobs for youth, poverty, teenagers having and raising babies by themselves, drugs, the huge amounts of money involved in rap videos and music production. It seems like Tupac could almost foresee his own death, especially as he expressed it in some of his raps and videos, like "I Ain't Mad Atcha" where he was wearing a white linen suit, as if he were already in heaven looking back at his life on earth. But when the geniuses of rap die off, everybody loses. Thank you for a thoughtful, if sad, interview about your own life and the tragedies that took Tupac and Biggie Small's young lives.

Street Life

I wanted to talk about life on the streets.

Life in the streets is hard because everyday I have to go through a lot of stuff that I really don't want to go through, but sometimes I don't have a choice.

Sometimes I have friends to turn to but other times friends could be people that get you into trouble and affect your life.

I am in here because a friend made me do something. Well, they didn't make me but they were doing it so I wanted to.

I know that when I get out I am going to be better
I am going to do better with my life and family.

-Israel, Durango/Maricopa Arizona

From The Beat: Friends can be very influential and sometimes we feel we need to do what they are doing, no matter how wrong it is, just to get their respect. You need to make your own choices because you do know right from wrong. Find positive influences that will not help you to get into trouble. What can you do to make things right with yourself and your family?

My Birthday

This is the second time that I have been locked up on my birthday but it is a little better than last time.

What makes it better is that I was able to see my mom today. If I was not detained, I would be able to eat all the food I want and I would be able to see my baby and my girlfriend.

Now my freedom is gone and I cannot talk to friends, girlfriends, or have any parties. Just lock down with all these guys and other people telling me what I can do. But I can tell you one thing: I won't be here three birthdays in a row

-Tremayne, Durango/Maricopa Arizona

From The Beat: Another year older and another year wiser? We hope with the next year you are able to make good decisions and you can spend your birthday doing something fun with people you love.

Dear Mama

This song, "Dear Mama," always meant something to me, since the first time I heard it on 106.1 KMEL. Tupac was always a role model in many different ways. "Dear Mama" reminds me how strong my mother is. I feel Tupac was a strong individual. "Dear Mama" is a great song.

-Olay, Marin

From The Beat: Tupac's "Dear Mama" seems to mean a lot to many kids and adults too, who know that their mothers have suffered and are struggling, often alone, to raise their children. It is a beautiful, sad, moving song. Even if your mother is very strong, doesn't she need you at home and your help? It is time for you to start showing her love as she has shown you. Right?

My Mother

Some one that has stabbed me in the heart and the back is my mother because she threw all my belongings outside in the garbage. She told me that she would come see me but she has not been here the whole month that I have been here. I knew she was going to do this to me, because she did tell me that if I kept on running away that I would need to find new clothes to bring back.

-Dennise, Durango/Maricopa Arizona

From The Beat: It sounds like your mother is hurt that you continually left. It sounds like she has been hurt before and now the hurt has turned to anger. We believe she still does care about you. What are you willing to do to mend this relationship?

Following through

Why can't you start what you finish
You say you want me back home but I hear different from others.

That makes me so confused and angry at you.

It makes me feel unwanted and like no one cares for me

-Christian, Durango/Maricopa Arizona

From The Beat: It can be disappointing when the people we count us let us down or break promises. It is always best to go to the source and ask the source rather than believing what you hear from others. You are cared about by many people who want you to succeed and be happy.

Invisible

invisible
it's critical
wishing i could be out of my room all the time
but i would have to be invisible
not possible, but it's a wish
that i would kiss and keep
keep and fall asleep with it
invisible is my partner
i wouldn't be lonely, if i was invisible
i'd be doing something
what does invisibility bring
i'm sheltered from all the problems
from all the hate
i don't want to be late
to be invisible

-Tabatha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad your words are visible on our page, 'cause your inner feelings get to be displayed. Likewise, your problems will become not only invisible but truly go away, when you put in the work to do right both night and day. Loneliness may still come and go, but no one but you will know why or when if you start to live as well as you write in The Beat Within.

Don't Be Afraid

Don't be afraid
To love someone
Totally and completely
Love is the most fulfilling
And beautiful feeling in the world
Don't be afraid that you will
Get hurt
Or that the other person
Won't love you
There is a risk in
Everything you do
And the rewards
are never so great
As what love can bring
So let yourself get involved completely and honestly
And enjoy the possibility
That what happens
Might be the only real
Source of happiness
To my wife LaLa

-G-Money Now Known as G-Love, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why do you think more people feel safe taking risks on the street, with their lives, than they do taking risks with love, with their hearts? You're obviously a great philosopher on love, so tell us your theory on why people are so scared of love?

My Wifey

Thank you for being my lover
But most of all
For being my friend
I trust you so completely
Admire and appreciate
You so much, that whatever
Time has in store for us
I look forward to our tomorrows,
And lovingly on our yesterday.
To my wifey LaLa I love you

-G-Money Now Known as G-Love, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're curious why you changed your name. Is love becoming more important to you than money?

Mistrial

i'm going to be out fast like a taz car
i'm going to be away from the metal bar
i'm not going to be close, i will be far
away from trouble
as my vision doubles
from all the tears
i'm happy, nothing to fear
god is my metal of shear
i'm feeling good, as i should
'cause i'm going out
out of here, this jail cell
i'm not a snitch, i will not tell
i look back, you the person that fell
i'm going to be out of here fast like a taz car
it won't be missed
as i ball up my visit
with all the anger
i'm strong
i didn't do nothing wrong
for this is a mistrial

-Tabitha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Major props on your imminent freedom. We'll miss your poems though. Maybe if you write us and mail them in to a Beat staff person, we'll still get to print and read them!

I Love You

I love being you friend and lover
Doing little things to brighten
Your life
And watching you burst into a warm
Smile that says, "thank you for being you!"
But what I like most is how you and
I have fallen in love
There are no demands, no using
Each other, just letting those wonderful feelings
Continue to grow...
And in return, finding that being
Friends and lovers at the same time
Is a rich and rewarding experience
To my wifey LaLa

-G-Money Now Known as G-Love, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lucky woman! We hope you send this copy of the Beat to her.

Poem

Sometimes late at night
I think of the color of your eyes
When you laugh
And the tilt of your head
when you listen
and I remember the warmth
of your touch
when we are close
in the darkness of those nights
I see you in my mind
And I can feel the love we share
And I know we are special
And that out love will endure
To my wifey Lala

-G-Money Now Known as G-Love, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Another genuine, honest love poem to remind us that not all of our hearts inside the hall are filled with darkness. Thanks for sharing!

What I Am Grateful For

What am I grateful for? I am grateful for being on this earth right now, because I got a good mom and dad, plus my grandma is better to me, too!

But my grandma is kind of sick, and I hope she gets better. I am going home Saturday, and I am grateful for that, to see my grandma for once. But I am also grateful for her taking care of me after I got hit by that car and I was in the hospital. Her and my grandpa took care of me.

And I am grateful to have a niece and a nephew, and another one on my dad's said. I don't get to see them like I want to, but I am grateful just to be alive at this time. There are a lot of people that don't like me on this earth, so I hope I can stay alive — and I am grateful to see the ones I love.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Don't take the talk of these "haters" at Camp too seriously. It shocks us when we here people we are learning to respect, tease someone else for no good reason. It is a sort of hate, to be sure, but so undeserved — motivated by the saddest part of an individual who can only feel better about himself by trying to make someone else feel worse or less than. God bless you and all of your family, too. Keep your head up high.

Why Do I Need Help?

I need help because I got a lot of headaches and I got a lot of back problems — and the doctor can't do nothing about it. I got to go through all of these pains, my headaches and my back problems.

And I be stressing because I can't go home to see my grandma. I got to stay here because I let people get to my head. And plus I am in a lot of pain, but I don't let nobody know nothing about me because I don't want them to trip me up.

But that is why I need a lot of help. I am not going to lie about it. So that is what I got to say about my health problems and my other problems.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The headaches and back problems may not be caused by stress, but stress can definitely make both of them worse. Yeah, it's hard not to stress when you think you're going home to see family over the weekend and then something happens to keep you restricted to Camp. And we know for a fact that others do try to, as you say, get into your head. Camp's a stressful place to be sometimes. We're sorry it's so hard for you. What else can you do but do your best? Don't quit on yourself!

To My Family That I Love

To my great grandmother: I knew that you was goin' to a better place, because God called your name and told you it was time to come home.

I love you Great Grandmother. I miss the way you made them cakes for me when I was little. And I miss playing cards with you and my grandma and my grandpa. Everybody misses you and loves you very much. I hope you come back and see me and my kids when I get a little older. But you is in a better place right now in heaven. So I'll see you when I get there.

So, I love you and I miss you. I want you to come back home to us, so it can be the same way again.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It will never be exactly the same, but the love she gave you, you can pass on someday to your own children and grandchildren right here on earth. People die and go to heaven, but the love they leave behind in the hearts of those they love — it just goes on and on, as long as there is love in your heart and in the hearts of those you love.

Why Did I Fight?

Why did I fight? I don't know why, but I just did. I told him, "I don't want to fight you!" I pushed him out the way and tried to leave out the bathroom, but he grabbed my arm and I just swung at him because I did not know what he was going to do next.

He had his hands up and he told me, "I want to fight!" And I told him, "I am going home tomorrow, and I don't want to fight." But he did not listen to me. So another person told him to go into the bathroom. So he did. Because he wanted to fight, I went to the Hall for three days! For something somebody else started!

But after we came back from the Hall, he said, "Let's squash it." And I said, "Okay." But I don't know about that. I need to go home!

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're guessing what you don't know about is if he means what he says. The best thing to do, is act like he does. You know sometimes someone you get into a fight with at first can later become a friend. But, then, you know you're not at Camp to make friends. You're at Camp to do the best program you can, get released, and stay free! This was a very frustrating experience for you to have to go through.



To My Grandpa

I love you, Grandpa. Plus I know that you love my grandma and that she loves you, too. And I am grateful that you helped my grandma take care of me when I was little — I thank you for that.

You are my mom's daddy, and I thank you for helping here out when she needed it. And I am sorry for not listening to you when you told me to do right. I am mad that you are gone now, because I need you now. I am at Camp Sweeney and people are always talking trash to me, and I am always the person that gets in trouble!

I wish this would have never happened. And I am sorry for all the things I put you through, and I hope that you accept my apology to you. I love you! See you when I get there. Love you, bye!

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know that your grandpa up in heaven more than accepts your apology. He also sees your suffering down here, and he knows when it's not your fault. That doesn't mean you can give up and go bad, just because you get in trouble when it's not you who started it or whatever. But it does mean that you can know in your heart that your grandpa loves you and is proud of you for doing your best, whether you get in trouble or not. Write him a letter whenever you feel like it, and the angels will take it straight up to heaven and sing your words in his ears.

To the Last Man

is it a game we play
 everyday of our lives
 trying to find what we believe
 trying to learn what is right
 so many mistakes i made
 so many times
 so many tears
 trying to learn with these regrets of mine
 just so many times
 i done wished i could change my mind
 change my life and leave the game behind
 and it's been so many days
 i done prayed i could find a way
 find the heart and the time to say
 only so many are blessed
 wit' so many chances
 so many checks wit' so many arrests
 and it's been so many deaths
 so any prisons with ninjas in there
 and the system keep' playin' them
 to the last man
 so many tests
 so many haters love seein' ya stress
 but tribulations come wit' being the best
 everyday i realize
 that this may be the last day of my life
 walking down the street
 i find i'm coming closer and closer to losing my mind
 'cause when it rains it pours
 isn't life worth more
 i don't even know what i'm hustling for
 you gotta do what you gotta do
 just to make it through
 all the hard times that's gonna face you
 this is the life
 striving to survive
 living will always be a struggle
 looking for someone true
 to love you
 but all i see
 is the hall, the 'y' and the penitentiary

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's like climbing a wall, and as high as you go, you never reach the top though. Can't go back down, can't reach top, and can't stop. That's what it can feel like. And when it's everyone you know that has to live like this, those in your family and those you grew up with, it's hard to imagine yourself breaking rank — hard to imagine you'll really get a chance to change the way you live. It is possible to achieve, but it will take every ounce of strength in you to continue to believe and to follow through, overcoming all those trials and tribulations coming at you.

My Special Star

in the sky so far away
 there's a star that meets me
 in a special place
 i sing and i pray
 awaiting
 hoping the sun will wake me
 in the morning of the next day
 for this star i wait
 hoping it'll brighten up my day
 for this star is my whole wide world
 i wish upon a star
 in the sky is where you are
 don't tell no one
 it's our secret place
 so meet me there tonight
 outside the house at half past eight

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That moment of solitude under the night sky, when we gaze at the stars all but outside of time, when forgotten dreams awaken in our minds, and upon a star we wish with all our might — and hope comes alive in the twinkling starlight.

Look In the Streets

when i look in the streets
 a depression grows within my beatin' heart
 i see knocks tryin' to make too little change
 not with their life but to get a rock
 i see little children tryin' to be
 like the oh-gee they see in the street
 when i look in the streets
 i say to myself why'nt god just let us be
 why can't we be like martin luther king junior
 a great man was he
 when i look in the streets
 i see people who act, talk, walk like me
 and they just like me

-Choyce, 150 Crew

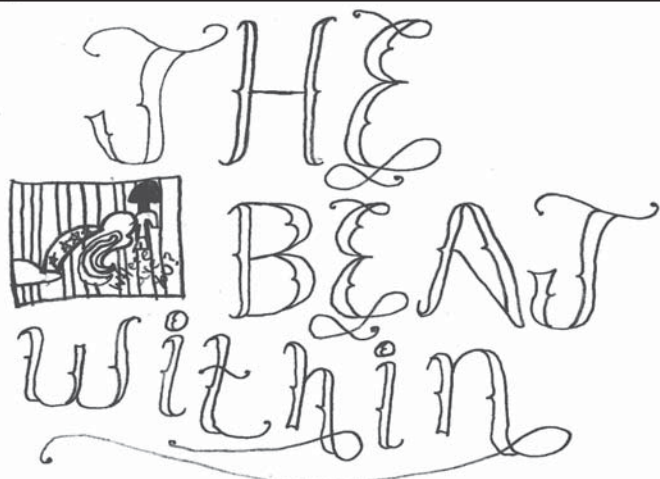
From The Beat: The street is not a pretty sight to see. Widespread poverty and a wide underground gangster economy fueled by the illegal drug trade, has made our urban streets look like more like a third-world society than any facsimile of the American dream. Meanwhile, we build more and more prisons to house young men who merely reflect the diseased state of their street environment. Look what's happened to you, and all four of your brothers, too! Not one of you free! It's a sad sight to see.

Is It Impossible

do you believe in love at first sight
 i believe that the sun was made for light
 i believe that love comes in many different forms
 lately i haven't been able to point out exactly what
 my feelings are for you
 all i know is that i want to build something with you
 that seems to be impossible
 i'm walking around with a guilty cloud
 i have to face each and every day thinking about
 all the bad things people might have to say
 in my head i think i love you
 but it has to be in a different way
 'cause you can't love two people
 in the same way
 can you
 is it impossible

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you're separated by time and space, it's even harder to answer the questions you face than when you share your nights and days with someone about whom you feel this way. In the interior of your locked and solitary room, as in the interior of your solitary heart, it's hard to say what's possible to do, or start, or stop — when these mysterious feelings seem all you've got.



I really was so proud of her.
It's just hard for me because I
was really opening up to her
and she opened up to me.

Good-Bye To A Friend

So much has happened here at PSK lately, but the most hardest one was my second little sister had to leave. I really was so proud of her. It's just hard for me because I was really opening up to her and she opened up to me. When I found out I got really sad but everything happens for a reason and I hope and wish the best for you. I can't name names but she knows who she is.

-Kalisa
From The Beat: It's always sad to have to say good-bye to those we care for, but it's also nice to know that you formed such close friendships. You, too, will leave here when it's your time, and then you and she can keep your friendship.

On Two Short's Wall

If I could be a fly on the wall, I would be on Too Short's wall. I would like to be on his wall because I would love to see how he lives and deals with day-to-day things. Also, I think it would be cool to see how a rapper who is big lives. That is why I would like to be on Too Short's wall.

-Pooh
From The Beat: What do you think you would learn about Too Short that you don't already know? Is he your favorite rapper? Why? What does he rap about that speaks to you? Do you rap? About what?

A Fly On The Wall

I wanna know what is going on in Iraq
I wanna know what's up in the streets
I wanna know what is going down with the boys
Yo, I'm at the Walden House and I wanna know
what's up with this stuff
They stay steady on me, bra
I'm stuck and cornered

-Crackhead Maria
From The Beat: If you're stuck and cornered, then you cornered yourself. We hope you get your mind unstuck so that you can arm yourself with the tools you'll need on the outs so that you won't corner yourself again. As for being a fly on those walls, we wish you were because we'd also like to know what they say when we're not around...

The Perfect Home

The perfect home is having a full fridge, having a clean house and when you walk outside you ain't scared. You don't hear gunshots and hella people outside. You feel safe and the outside ain't dirty or tagged on.

-Maria Crakhead
From The Beat: We can understand why a safe house with food in the fridge would be the perfect house. Does it matter who's living in the house with you?

Real?

Is real having gold teeth and going dumb, driving scrapers? Nah, nah, not in my eyes.

You would be surprised what I thought was wise —
selling dope, pimpin' girls, cuttin' school
doing da foo'.

That's that 'hood part of me
Stackin' money, getting' a job still going to school
not do the foo'.

Is that real?
If you look in the dictionary them four words mean being or occurring in fact.

That's real.
All you youngstas running 'round wearing a frown talking 'bout you real.

Mayne, yo' definition of real don't pay the bill.

I'm gon' continue to keep it real, but in the end it's always some hatas that's gon get within...

-Jazz'ah Belle

From The Beat: We always wonder what people mean when they write that they're going to "keep it real." They're locked up and answering to a bunch of strangers and telling us that they're on top of their "game" and "stacking their chips" and they're keeping it real. We prefer your definition of real. So, in your life, what is now "being or occurring in fact?"

The Test

The hardest test I took is being in this punk group home... It's hard 'cause I can't do anything in here... I keep getting in trouble over the littlest stuff... but it's coo'. The Beat have faith in me and the notorious Crackhead will come thru!

P.S I hate it here, and I miss my boyfriend

-Crakhead Maria
From The Beat: Let's see if we understand... you don't like being here! Well, Maria, if this is the hardest test you've ever had to deal with, then you haven't really been tested yet. Here you get support, counseling, peers, meals, a roof — and a program that lets you write whatever you're feeling. If you keep getting into trouble, then your biggest test is with yourself.

It's hard 'cause I can't
do anything in here . . .
I keep getting in trouble
over the littlest stuff



Livin' It Up

I'm livin' it up for the ones who ain't here to get high.
Pop a pill for the ones who ain't here too.
Get girls for the ones who ain't here.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: With your attitude and your nickname, which we cut, it sounds like you're trying to follow your friends onto the RIP list sooner rather than later. Try something else, and think that your dead friends might have learned a lesson or two and wish they could communicate with you about what it really means to live it up.

Comin' To an End

My time is comin' to an end up here at Camp. I been here six months, but it feel like two months! It's almost over for this. But the question is: Will I do the right thang? I don't know, but whatever I do, I'm a stay solid.

I had a dream — I had a dream, but it was nothin' like Dr. King. Keep on maintainin', doin' what you do best. They droppin' like flies. Who next? The murder rate don't stop, but who gon' stop it?

-Alphabets

From The Beat: Each of us must stop it. How? Take a good hard look at the game — and drop it! You will not be staying solid with you if you return to what you used to do. It's not what you do best, 'cause you haven't even put yourself to the test by giving your all to giving the grind a good long rest — so how would you know what you can and can't do? The streets are full of fools.

The Biggest Test

I wish I could have been there to help in a decision to help stop the 9-11-01 attack. My biggest test is accepting myself and my problems and background. It's hard to accept that I don't have what some people do, like a family.

-David

From The Beat: We wish you could have been there too! Part of growing up is accepting your own (and others') limitations, and that's hard for all of us. We hope you study hard, work hard and can help the community and country in many ways.

Up At Camp Sweeney

What's up wit' it, Beat? I seen about four fights this week at Camp Sweeney. I got restricted for having weed in my system, so I haven't been home in a minute — but I'm a go home on the thirtieth of this month.

Six people ran since I been here because they can't take this shhh. Some system workers be doing hecca stuff. But even though I came out dirty, and the system be doing hellah shhh, I'm a still pimp this thang — so I can be done wit' my time and cut!

I been to the turf once, and shhh ugly now. It ain't nothin' but funk. You can't be eating no more because somebody always gon' come through. But you can't go to war without money. That's why we still posted, 'cause we gotta eat. But fo' all y'all that doing time and it ain't life — keep yo' head up and beast it out. Get back at you.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: Thanks for the news from Camp as well as the street. And props to you for refusing to run away from Camp just out of frustration. As you know, running away will just give you more time to pay when you're locked up again another day, praying for another chance at Camp — 'cause compared to the alternatives, it doesn't get easier. As for your views on the street, it's time for you to find another way to eat, 'cause between funk and the police, posted up waiting for trouble to bust ain't no way to be — not if you want to stay alive, healthy and free!

The Perfect Home

My idea of a perfect home depends on the atmosphere, the vibe you get from it, you and the house have something in common.

-Kid

From The Beat: Interesting perspective! Tell us about some of your homes and what you had in common with them.

RIP

First off let me say RIP to all my lost boys. I remember good times with all my fallen ones. I remember when me and Doobie was at a party and I scraped some ninja and after that his uncle wanted to fight me and Doobie said, "naw don't fight 'em."

But I was mad and Doobie went off 'cause they was tryna jump me. We used to get high, drunk, and off pills.

I also love my brah Morph he was a rapper for the hood. I love my brah 'cause he always looked out for me when I was high off a pill and took care of me and took me home late night when I tried to pull an all nighter with him. He was about money and his daughter but he gone. I love my brothers.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: Sounds like you're headed to being a lost boy yourself if you keep running on the steam of revenge and pills. The time is now to think about your own life, and live life legitly in the name of the ones no longer with us!

Simple Math

one plus one
is always going to equal two
and you in my life
is always going to make
my dreams come true
i love you

-Dreamer

From The Beat: We disagree about the math, 'cause with love in real life, one plus one equals three sometimes. When a child comes as a physical manifestation of the love of two, then one plus one can equal one family, too. For three with love can equal one: the mother, the father, and the daughter or son.

I Don't Know

Why do I stay getting in trouble? I don't know why I do stay getting in fights. I don't know why do I stay sneaking out my house at night. I don't know why do I stay yelling at my mom. I don't know. How come I can't stay calm? I don't know but I hope I go to heaven and not hell but I'm out.

-Lil' Joker

From The Beat: We don't know either but we suspect that deep in your heart you do know, or if you don't know now you have the capacity to search your soul and find out.

Finally At Camp

What's up wit' it, Beat? This the homie, Shagy, from Oakland, just sayin' what's up from Camp! I'm finally here. It took long enough!

But it's coo' up here and everything, but i'm 'bout to cut probably. I'm a just see how it is first and make my decision about it. Well, I'm out. So, a'ight then, Beat, I'll holla back!

-Shagy

From The Beat: If you go to Camp, just waiting for something to go wrong so you can run, you've already lost the race. Camp is not only a second chance, it's also a test of your resolve to make some changes in your life and start doing right. Hope you both stick it out and learn something in the process.

I Don't Know How

What's up Beat Within. This your boy Lil' Joker I don't think I know how to change because I'm so used to living this gang life.

-Lil' Joker

From The Beat: We know there's no easy instructions for changing. But if you want it, keep focused on small steps, small decisions and keep your eye out for bigger opportunities. Thanks for your honesty.

I Know

I know you know bad is good. I don't. I know I don't have to act hard 'cause these people ain't nobody. I know they won't say nothing to me at all. I know it all falls down. I know I am from this town. I know some of y'all hate us. I know you probably want to kill us. I know you don't feel us. I know you know who this is. I know you know who I am. I know who I'm gonna be. Just keep my name out your mouth you know that.

-Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: Don't worry so much about what everybody else thinks. Freedom comes in many ways, one is free of physical walls like jail and the other is the walls of the street mentality.

Night and Day

i think about you night and day
i pray to god that you are okay
at the end of the day i shed a tear
and i wish so badly that you were here
i asked god to help me
i just realized that i'm just
truly missing my baby — i love you

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Don't let the ache of separation make what you're facing even more difficult to bear, by adding exaggerated fears.

Countin' Down the Days

What up, Beat? This Dreamer from Hayward, coming at you from Camp. Yeah, they finally came and swooped me up from the Hall. So, I guess I'm going in the right direction. Now I'm just countin' down the days 'till I get to go home on my home pass!

The days really do go faster, and there be hellah homeboys here. I hope I can do a good program and get out quick so I can handle my business. Well, that's it for now, Beat.

To all still doing time behind the walls, keep your head up and don't let your chin touch your chest! This Dreamer sayin' alrato from Camp.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Props on making it to Camp, and on the plan to do a good program. Just don't let the homeboys pull you into too much mess. 'Cause the best way to get home soon, is to stay away from trouble and just do your best.

As I'm Here

As I'm here I be thinkin' to myself, damn man I'm a dumb ass for keep on comin' back over and over and as I sit in my room being a window warrior . I said damn I need to do my program and stop running from these group homes 'cause I need to do what I got to do. I'm messin' up my life as I'm here thinkin' in my room damn and prayin' to myself sayin' please don't let one of my friends get shot and killed in this crazy town called Oakland. I also think to myself what are those girls doin' while I am in this institution. I'm not trippin' though as long as they're writin' me. To be continued...

-Little Vee

From The Beat: Why do you keep running? Of course we understand not wanting to be in a group home, but you know what the price you pay for running, so why do it? We're not questioning your actions but asking you to take the time to explain and understand them, and teach Beat readers not to make the same mistakes.

My New Home

Describing the perfect home would be where I'm going in a week or so, that's to Atlanta. The judge is giving' me a chance to do what I'm supposed to do. Where I'm going is a mansion with my Aunt T.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: Drop us a line from Atlanta, we'd love to hear how it goes for you.

Why Did I Stay Outside?

I should have stayed in the house. It was dark, and the police was out, but I did not care. But whatever comes around, goes around.

But it was something about that night — I just should've stayed inside! But the boy said I did not do nothing, and I told the police, "I picked up that i-Pod." But that is why I am in Camp now.

So, I hope I don't get in trouble when I get back on the outs after I leave here. I will do anything to stay out of trouble so I won't have to come back to the Hall. So that is what I got to say about that night.

-Demetrus

From The Beat: All you can do, is do your part. Maybe it wasn't too smart to pick up that i-Pod, because you didn't know if it was stolen and then thrown away to get rid of evidence, or whatever. Still, it's a natural thing to do, and you didn't do anything wrong. All you can do is the best you can. Remember though, sometimes people will judge you not by your doing wrong, but looking like you might have done something wrong. So stay safe.

First Time Lock-Up

What up Beat this Lil' Trail. Well my first time being locked-up was when I was about nine years old. I was at school and I took my dad's gun. It was a 22 'cause this boy was talking shhhh to my sister and he was bigger than me and I knew that he could beat my ass so I took the gun just to scare him.

So, I walked home, went in my dad's room and put the gun back in his safe place. The police came to my house, and I didn't let them in. My big brother did, so they asked for me and my big brother said I wasn't there. They left and came back around nine o'clock and my mom and dad were there. They asked if I was home and my mom called me down stairs, when I came the police asked me did I bring a gun to school and I said no. They said a boy told them that I did. They asked my mom and dad can they search the house they said yes you can. They did but they didn't find they gun. So they let me go home the next day.

-Lil' Trail

From The Beat: What did you learn from this? Did you regret bringing the gun to school, or was it worth it to scare that other kid? What would you advise a younger brother to do in the same situation? How did your parents respond to this?

RIP

At night before I go to sleep, RIP Cell is what I say. I remember the day when we was on the street play fighting and I said I was going to the deep to get something he said be safe. I said no you be safe. Then the next day he died and I was just with him that last night.

-Lil' Tie

From The Beat: How painful and ironic that your last words to him were "be safe". We hear young people saying that to each other all the time as a substitute for "good-bye" — but do we really mean it? When we say be safe are we saying good luck or are we saying stay out of trouble, stay off the streets? Really, what does it mean to be safe these days?

In Love With This Girl

I am in love with this girl named, "Good Girl" — and she is nice to me all the time. I would like to take her out, but I don't know yet if I will. I got to see if she wants to do that, 'cause I will do whatever she wants to do.

She is a beautiful girl, and I want to be in this relationship. I hope someday I have a baby with this girl. She is down for whatever! I want to do right by her because she is my dream girl, the best I could hope to find in this world. She makes me happy.

So, that is what I got to say about "the pretty young things" that are out there waiting for a person like me to be in their life.

-Demetrus

From The Beat: It's not about "pretty young things" but about that one girl who touches your heart and makes you happy, the one who smiles to see you approaching and is happy just to share time with you — to work side by side and do right in life. With all that in place, it's okay to dream of starting a family — but get that good paying job first. Life in the game always ends with a curse.

At Camp

What's uppie, Beat? This is Turtle, coming from Camp. First day, too! Man, yeah, been waiting 'till they get me, and the day came. I feel special like I got hella stars! Nah, joking.

Well, I do wanna give a shout out to some of the homies from San Francisco, but The Beat won't let me list names. So I'll just have to say, stay up, stay strong — you know who you are. Do your program, and we'll all see each other again in the free world.

-Turtle

From The Beat: Props on getting out of the Hall and into the Camp, but now, don't just do your time, or your time will be doing you. Volunteer for some programs, do your schoolwork, stay busy — not only does the time go faster, but you might learn something.

In Camp Sweeney

The first day I got here, I knew it was going to be a lot of problems — because I know a couple of people in here. But I did not know it was going to be this bad.

Even some of the system folk is racist toward me, and I don't like that. I try to stay out of trouble, but sometimes when a staff comes round, it seems like I just get in trouble for nothing. I don't know why, but I just do. And the system lies against me a lot about things that didn't even happen.

I don't think I'm going to the baseball game this week, but I hope I can go, so that I can get out of here. But I think it is all going to be cool if I could just turn my act around so I can get released. I want to go home.

-Demetrus

From The Beat: It's just the nature of a place like the Hall or even Camp, that the need to keep control means that from time to time someone gets in trouble even if he isn't the one to have started something. It's almost like in a basketball game, when the referee doesn't see the first smack or whatever but only sees the other guy swinging back — and it's the second guy who gets the try to keep a positive attitude and do your best, no matter what.

The Test While Incarcerated

Well, Beat Within, the hardest test that I was going through is when they ask me when I caught a new case for assault, when I was on a warrant already.

But then when they asked me did I want to go on trial, I was scared of what might happen because they was trying to charge me with an armed robbery too when I already had a case. So I pleaded and now I go to court on September 19, and I'm kind of caught in the middle.

But today I spoke to my PO and she said I'm going to camp for nine months with her recommendation.

-Twan

From The Beat: Sounds like your next big test is coming up: Camp. A lot of people run from camp, or catch more time. On the other hand, they have great programs: Positive Minds, Cornerstone (where architects come in to help you learn how to design houses), and of course The Beat Within. If you want to, you might even find that you come out of camp in better emotional shape than you went in. What do you think?

Going To A Group Home

Yeah, what it do. I am from East Palo Alto. Light skinned with dreads. But they're sending me to a group home and I should be leaving in like two weeks. I am going to try to pimp that shhhh out if I can, but I am going to try to good a good program. I was trying to go to camp but they didn't accept me. But I am gone.

-Baby Bl

From The Beat: We wish you the best of luck with your program. There are many temptations, so stay strong.

What's On My Mind

You know what's on my mind? Let me tell you. The first thing on my mind is always — mi familia (my family). But right now what's really on my mind is Camp and what I'm going to do up here — because it's hella boring. But it's better than being down at the Hall, 'cause up here at Camp you have rec' all day.

But anyways, like I was saying, what's on my mind is God and how He's helping me turn my life around. And He's also testing me by putting good or bad things in my path and then seeing what I'll do. Well, I don't know what else to say but to live your life and nobody else's. 'Till next time, it's your crazy uncle, Fairlas, saying goodbye and God bless.

-Fairlas

From The Beat: So how are you doing with the tests God's giving you? Are you passing up the bad and seizing onto the good things that come your way. You say God is helping you turn your life around, and that's great! But you know what they say, "God helps those who help themselves." So are you helping or hurting yourself with the choices you're making lately — and if it's a mixed bag, tell us about both sides of the coin. Are you learning from your mistakes, even and especially the new ones you make?

Do I Believe In God?

I believe in God because he would not have put us on this earth if He wanted nobody to believe in Him. And I believe in Him because He works in miraculous ways.

God is the one that told me it was time for my great grandmother to go home, and He told me my grandpa was leaving — but it's okay. They are in a better place; so I love Him for putting them in a better place.

So, God, I pray to You to watch over me and my family, so that we can be safe. And put all of the bad people in Hell, so they can burn and die, so they can see God puts people here to do good and not to do bad!

So, I love You, God, and please watch over my family. And thank you for that.

-Demetrus

From The Beat: You'd think with all the hurt on earth that people would want to be part of making the world more like heaven than hell. We'd prefer to see those who do bad to see the error of their ways, and start doing good to make up for the past — starting today. That's what we see you trying to do, which is very cool. Okay?

Wrong Place Wrong Time

Well I'm in here for being involved in a drive by shooting with another gang. Wrong place at the wrong time. Every night I say to myself RIP my friend. My first time holding a gun was when I was a very young teen, it was a twenty-five semi-automatic. You can't walk around the town without a pistol if you're in my squad 'cause we messing and stay dropping ninjas.

-B

From The Beat: Sounds like you're in the wrong place at the wrong time most of the time. Can you see the connection between your friend dying and your squad's habit of dropping ninjas? You need to be off the street if you care carrying a gun. Hopefully incarceration will benefit you and not make matters worse.

A Letter

a letter from you to me probably means more to me than a letter from me to you because a letter from you makes my day that much easier to get through i love you

-Dreamer

From The Beat: You could still write two to her one, and feel the day went easier when it's done.

One Step Closer

What's up Beat, this is Dreamer, comin' at you still from behind these walls. But not for long. My PO came and told me I should go to camp any day now. That gets me one step closer to going home and getting where I need to be. I'm just waitin' for my first home pass cause after that I'll be gone every weekend and things will go a lot faster, and seem lightweight normal for once. When I get home I'ma stay home with my loved ones. I'm not going nowhere. Well it's time to wrap it up. All stay up and stay true, see you on the outs. RIP Gimp y Lil Toro

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Good luck, Dreamer. Stay out of trouble and write to The Beat (from the outs!) to let us know how things are going for you.

Tryin' to Get Home

What up wit' it Beat, this yo' boy Lil' Gary still in max trying to get home. I had an interview with the probation officer of Boys' Republic in Chino Hills. I denied the offer for Boys' Republic because it is too far away. Right now I'm trying to get home in Danville, if I get into this group home I'll be close to my house. Then it'll be all coo'. Much love, I'm gone.

-Lil' Gary

From The Beat: We hope you get into the group home you've chosen, and we hope even more that while you're there you focus on what you do to succeed there. Home will always be waiting for you, no matter where they send you, and "all" you have to do is work on your inner strength so that when you get home, you can stay there. Wherever they send you, take advantage of it! If there's therapy, do it. If there's school, study! If there's job training, learn it. That way, when you get out, you'll have what it takes to make it out in the world. Remember, where you are, so you just might not get what you want.

The Coolest Staff

My name is Thomas, I been here six times.

I've been in group homes since I was eleven, 'cause Moms couldn't handle me in her life and at the time, she was goin' through some things. I was acting up. I was out smoking and fighting. My dad was in San Leandro. I saw him every weekend, but he was basically a weekend dad all my life.

My moms, she tried to send me here and I was too young. Social Services sent me to a bunch of group home... there was one in Fruitvale, it wasn't just a house, it was a big facility too.

The coolest staff at the group home was King Beef and Reason, because they always looked out for me, and on my birthday they would take me to the spot for them fresh clothes and them forces. They also used to take me to the studio to listen to their music. They be on TV now, so I lost contact with them, but I talked to the old Unit Supervisor and he said they still work with the kids. So that's why they're the coolest staff I ever met.

-Nordseth

From The Beat: Thanks for the shoutout to the people who made the biggest difference to you. They must have seen something special in you to decide to give you that extra attention - what do you think it was that they saw?

Be Cool

What's up with it Beat, this be Lil' Man up in max and shhh, just trying to do my time and not let the time do me, if you know what I'm saying. I just want to say to all you youngstas to be cool out there while you got the time on your head.

-Lil Manman

From The Beat: Hey what's this? One of our top writers gives us just three lines? Say it ain't so! We'll get more from you next week, right?

This Ain't No Jail Talk

I got a rep from comin' back to the halls. I don't know why, maybe because all the dirt I did for the respect.

And all this shhh is catching back on me. Last year in 2005 I went to jail 5 times, which is a bad thing.

So what could I do about this shhh? I know, stop doing the same shh. I got plans for what I'm going to do when I finish this time. Get a legit job and kick- it with my wifey. And this ain't no jail talk, this is real talk. So forget jail and give me the mail.

Holla at yo' boy.

-Lil' Keith

From The Beat: This determination is good to hear. It's a trip how much we hurt ourselves trying to get that "respect" from other people, when really the only respect that matters is SELF respect. You don't need to prove who you are to anyone out there, if deep down in your soul you know who you really are. Plans, family, work... all signs of self-respect. Like you said, let this be real talk, not jail talk.

Another Day in the Hall

Today I was asleep when this staff woke me up and when he did I cussed him out harshly.

Then I ate my breakfast fast, wishin' I was eatin' them pork chops... back to what I was saying at school you know me learnin' and trying to get a edumacation. I ask the teacher a question and somebody laughs at my question so now I'm heated, but my table partner to be cool so I chilled but was not cold yet.

-Lil' Dre

From The Beat: You asked an honest question in class and someone laughed at you? That's too bad, because that means you were trying to do something good for yourself and instead of supporting you, someone tried to hold you back. But you had someone watching your back- your table partner - and so you didn't you didn't get yourself into trouble. In a way, that's a lesson you can't get from a book, and the most valuable lesson you can learn. You keep your cool, that means you win.

RIP Frank

My ninja Frank was like my lil' brother. We went everywhere with each other. He was shot in West Oakland and his funeral was the first funeral I cried at. He always told me to just be coo' and stay out of jail. And being in jail makes me think about my lil' bra every day, so that's why I'm saying RIP Frank.

-Lil Gary

From The Beat: We're so sorry you lost Frank. Sorry for him, for his family, for all the families who lose their loved ones to the streets. He gave you some advice before he left - he gave you guidance. Stay out of jail, he said - and you still can. Imagine how happy he would be if he knew you got out of the death game, and went on to live a positive life in his name.

This Home

My perfect home is my house. It would be filled with my whole family. I would want a dog, cat, and possibly some fish. There would be home cooked meals everyday. There would be lots of time spent together and lots of kids. Also lots of love.

-A lovely home

From The Beat: That really does sound like a perfect home. We hope you get there soon.

At Court

I would like to be temporarily invisible when the judge makes the decision of my stay here, I want to know how long I'd be here before he told me so I wouldn't be surprised like they think I would. It's sort of like I'd know what's coming before they thought I knew.

-Crew Face

From The Beat: We can see why you would want to know first. We hope when you do find out, it's what you expected.

One Time Too Many

This ya boy Domo writing to y'all from 150. I been in here one time too many, this my eighth time in here.

It's about time for a ninja to get his life on track. I been given multiple chances and sent to a group home. I ran, went back, I got kicked out in a week and a half and now I got to court tomorrow for my camp sentence. I'm thinkin' about pimpin' it, but I'm having second thoughts. It's too many of my potnas locked up.

We got to get our lives straight and get how we live. Keep it solid.

-Domo

From The Beat: Those second thoughts might just save you from a lifetime of hell. Tell us this, what kind of life could you have if you WEREN'T locked up? What are the places on this big planet you'd want to visit? What kind of work would you like to be doing. Because right now, jail is all you "know" but what about your imagination? If you can imagine a better place to be, maybe you can take the steps to get yourself there.

Special Girl I Got

What it do, Beat. Yeah this yo' boy ???. Yeah I'm here to talk about someone special. She's all I got.

Yeah yeah, best to believe a ninja like me got his main one. Yup she's special to me. She give me what I need, and she always tryin' not to be incomplete. Yeah she's the one that made me get off my feet. So you best to believe. Man yo' bra just don't know what ya can find in that one special love. Well the female that I got, she is all I need. No matter if I cheat behind her back. As long as I know that she's a real deal, you feel me?

Man this one that I got, she always tryin' to keep a ninja out of trouble. But I just didn't pay attention. And now look where I'm at. Man I shoulda listened to her, like when she told me on the phone when I was on the block in Oakland. She told me to watch out for them crime times.

And I have thought that day would come, but now look where I am, doing time. I should have listened. But I'm have to end this and I have to write her back. I love you baby, and I'm a keep it lit.

-??

From The Beat: We can see that you love your girl - but if you cheat behind her back, then you're not really treating her with respect are you? And if you're not respecting her and the love you share, how can you be respecting yourself. It seems like the person who really gets cheated the most here - is you.

Chaka

What's crack-a-lacking? This is Chaka from Hayward. Well true love to my hyna... I'm just in here doing my tiempo. Well I got until mid-November to get myself straight because I'm going to be 18 this year, but you know" shhh could happen to anybody, not just me. So like I said, stay sucker free and do your tiempo so you can go to the ones you really love.

-Chaka

From The Beat: So tell us, now that you're turning 18, what are you going to do to change how you live? "Doing your time" doesn't tell us much. Will you read, study? Try to get a good job on the outs? We want to know that you have a real live plan for success!

An Invisible Fly

if I was a fly on the wall and was invisible I would be around all the females that said they loved me or wanted to be with me so I could see how they really felt about me, so I could be with them forever.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: Heh, you know how they say "Be careful what you ask for, you might get it?" It's almost good that we can't hear what people say about us when we're not there, just thinking about it could make a person go crazy... does this mean that you don't really trust the girls you spend your time with? Do they trust you?

The Spot

I can't wait to get out and get back to the spot. Not to go and do wrong again, but to help myself and all my patnas stay out of jail. 'Cause if we keep comin' here, nobody is out to watch over our loved ones.

-Lil' Eli

From The Beat: Your intentions sound good, but you need to prove that you can change what you do, before you start trying to get partners to change what they do, too. First things first. And when you finally do go to the spot, go with someone else who also wants to change his ways from wrong to right, so you can support each other when temptation's smiling teeth are ready to bite!

This Is Who I Am

My name is Lil' Eli, for the people who don't know me. Well, I call myself a savage, but what it means to me is: I'm a Solid, Always on my toes, Very smart, Always getting money, Goin' dumb, East Oakland resident.

-Lil' Eli

From The Beat: Since in your other piece this week you say you no longer want to do wrong, we want to know what your plan is to be "always getting money" after your release. Maybe "savage" should mean: I'm — Searching for a job, Always focused, Very patient, Always stay positive 'cause I'm for sure Going to be a successful, East Oakland role model.

My Hood

let me take ya to the neck of the woods of my 'hood, the bay area show everybody how we living like walking like a woman finger on the ready i always got money in my pocket i'm from the bay area...

-Tabitha

From The Beat: We don't need any more ready trigger fingers, 'cause that's how people are dying — not living — in the Bay Area. So for your safety and freedom, change the way you're living.

All Wrong (a daydream)

living the life
but things ain't what it seems
i'm burning
while life is still turning
we need to stop
before all my thoughts drop
i'm falling behind
help i think i'm blind
i can't see
things are not the way they should be
i can't feel my feet
my touch is gone
damn i wish i was home
but there's nothing left
i'm losin' my breath
i'm hurt feeling the dirt
and cursed
it's bad vibes
that's hugging my life
thinking that killing enemies was right
but now i see the light
i was feeling good
'cause i was making money in the 'hood
doin' what i could
i was just singing the same old song
but i started realizing it was all wrong

-Ti Baby

From The Beat: You've started to unleash some rhymes in our pages that both paint a picture of the life that brought you to these cages and the revelation that the money you were making wasn't worth the chances you were taking, not just of getting shot but getting dropped into the system's bottomless abyss. But it's not too late to change all this when you walk free. Set your mind to it and do it, Ti Baby.

Top Citizen

This Lil' Rony and I finally made Top Citizen, but it don't matter though. I'd rather go bad on staff, but I can't beat PS2 and sodas and straight through phone calls. It's not fair because they playin' catch 22 on us, but it's better than nothin'. I made top citizen look good you feel me but it's RIP Cell

-Lil' Rony

From The Beat: You say it doesn't matter but we think it does. You went from banging on the doors and getting extra roomtime to getting extra time out of your room, which means that for every time you wanted to go off on someone you didn't. You proved yourself the master of your own rage. That's what men do. Congratulations.

A Fly in the Courtroom

If I was a fly I would go spy in the court room to see what they be talking about, and hope I'm going to hear something good. Like that they gon' let me go home with my family

-Lil' June

From The Beat: Amen to that. We hope the court sends you home, and even more, we hope you stay there!

The Real All You Want To Know Music Show

If I was to have my own talk show, it would be about rappers, r and b singers, jazz players, gospel singers and etc. talking about the struggles that they have been through. Everything, I'll have a different performer whether they're famous or not. That will also give those that are not recognized a chance to get recognition. See, I think about all not just myself.

-Boss Lady

From The Beat: That sounds like a great show. Why do you think it is that most shows only give exposure to people who are already famous?

What's Good?

This that vato, Slick, coming at you from max. Just over here chillin' with a few love' ones, letting tiempo fly. Tired of all these j-cats that can't do time, cryin' about something or kicking on their doors.

I'm just up in here doing my thang, just shaking the fake, holding my grounds, waiting on this next court date to see what they talking about. With that said, just want to send my love to all those locked up, at Camp and in the outs. Alrato.

-Slick

From The Beat: It's been a long, long haul for you, waiting through all these court dates, not knowing your fate. Still, we urge you to concentrate on how you can maintain your freedom, 'cause it's still what you might be getting, without putting yourself back in a situation like this.

Mi Casa

Saludos. This yo' boy, Lil' Spooks, comin' at y'all from this so-called max unit. Well, I'm 'bouta write on this here topic. My perfect home will be in "the boondocks" (the cuts), and it would be known as "the thug mansion", where me and my true homies would be able to rest our heads, have a full bar and a boom-boom room, pool tables, swimming pool, the house already paid off (no bills!), life-time supply of food — and I would have a lot of beautiful, sexy women!

That would only be half of the house! The other half would be all of my family. I will have to make sure that they will not have to worry 'bout anything — no bills, no nada! I would make sure all my loved ones would be set. That would be "mi casa", and once I get out of CYA, I will work on that. Serio pedo! Well, to all, keep it solid. This vato is checking out. Alrato.

-Lil' Spooks

From The Beat: We feel the love through all the lavish fixings, both for your homies and for your family. But you know we have to wonder what effect having "thug mansion" in the same house as the little ones coming up in your family — how will that affect their thinking and what they choose to do with their lives in the present and in the future? It's a tough call, but when you really think about showing love to your family, you need to think about squaring up enough to keep that younger generation safe and heading in the right direction. You have to become a role model.

Hard Being Here

the hardest thing
for me
being here
for the next person
and i know
and the one time
i truly didn't do something
this time
that's really hard

-Baby Tim

From The Beat: It was all those times you "got away with it" that set you up to take this hard fall for someone else this time.

Dear Beat And Beat Readers,

Allow me to reintroduce myself my name is Bianca also known as Juicy! Greetings, it's been a minute since I wrote to The Beat. Unfortunately I'm back here at juvenile hall, but I guess everything happens for a reason.

I would like to send a special shout out to all doin' time. I know shhh lookin rough but through all the rain and the pain you got to keep your sense of humor. Keep yo head up and continue to do yo' program. Much love and respect.

-Juicy

from the beat: You say everything happens for a reason and we completely agree—but are you looking hard at those reasons so that you can learn the lesson your situation is begging to teach you? The thing is, life will keep throwing the same things at us until we really learn our lessons and try to grow through them. We know how smart you are, so...

People And No Respect

1. To me no respect is when a person who is not your friend or family touches your property and don't ask or tell you they touched it.
2. Looks at you like they want to do something, not that look like oh, your really pretty.
3. People who show favoritism and do not treat all as one can cause confusions.

-Lil' Lady Relle

From The Beat: Disrespect is difficult to deal with, that's for sure. We think the best way to handle it is to "kill them with kindness." This is the opposite of violence, verbal or physical. When someone is being rude, just be the nicest person you can be in return. If they really are trying to disrespect you they'll be taken off guard and wonder why they can't touch you with their negative ways.

What It Do Beat?

This your girl, coming from them Oakland streets I got two more days 'till I get out of here and go home to see my friends & my sister that is in LA. Once I get out I'll see my sister, lil' girl that was born on March 15, 2006. I can't wait to see my sister, it's been too long for me not to go see my sister in her house in LA. I can't wait to get out.

-Baby Girl

From The Beat: Have fun and stay safe!

What Am I Going To Do In Ten Years?

In ten years, I am going to be twenty-seven years old, and I should have about, oh, four or five kids by then. I am going to be in my own house, and I am going to get a mini-van for my wife and kids. Then I am going to get a Hummer for me! That way when I go out in my car, my wife will still have a mini-van to get around in.

But I know I can't do nothing 'till I get me a good job — and a nice girl! But I don't know, 'cause maybe I think I got the girl that I want already. I think she might already have a boyfriend, but I hope she don't! If she don't, I will get to be her boyfriend and she can be my girl! Then I can have someone to talk to again.

-Demetrus

From The Beat: Ten years is a long way off, but you can start working toward getting a steady job and maybe a steady girl when the right one comes along (if she hasn't already). Meanwhile, just making friends you can trust, boys or girls, is a must — someone you can talk to, who will give you good advice.

Home Is Grandma

my perfect home
is with my grandma
because that is the person
that took care of me
so i will never leave
my grandma's home
so that is just me

-Demetrus

From The Beat: We know this last time you got caught up, you didn't do it. So you know how hard it is to look trouble in the face, do good and come through it all okay. But for your grandma's sake and your own, keep doing right when you get back home.

Do The "Get Stupid"

i be off hella pills
hella bo
and hella henn
doin' my thang
me and my brah'
all out the window
ghost ridin'
goin' stupid doo-doo dumb
r i p mac dre

-Fatboy

From The Beat: We hope you're soon ready to say, "Been there, done that" — okay? You're only young once, but you only need to look at the street to see how drugs got people stuck on dunc and no longer having much fun. You feel? Life is long. Keep it real.

Now Look

you told me
you loved me
you showed me
you did too
now look
at this situation
i was a damn fool
i love

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Stay strong. Hold on. You might be wrong, but even if you're right — true love demands patience, day and night.

Why

Why am I locked up?
Why me, why us?
Just free me.
Just free us all.

-Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: Straight raw emotions that represent what so many Beat readers feel. Well said.

Invisible

a time i would want
to be invisible
is being in a bank

-Baby Tim

From The Beat: But what's the plan? Money isn't invisible, but perhaps entering data into the system? But with the power to be invisible, why risk your freedom committing any sort of crime?

Home

mom dad
and all siblings

-Baby Tim

From The Beat: Home is where the heart is.

SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

Almost My Birthday!

What's up with it, Beat, staff and supporters? This Little Gambino. But, anyways, I'm in here at the Ranch, down here at La Honda, just wanting to be free. But right now I know it ain't the right thing for me. I'm not about to play myself, feel me? But, yeah, I been up here ten months, but it's all good, because I get to see another day and be somewhat free, because you ain't locked in rooms. I mean, you still being told what to do, but it's nothing, just a way of life in here.

Damn, Beat, I'm finally gonna be seventeen on the 18th of September-it's this Monday. Like two weeks after that, I'll be getting my pass back. I lost it because I was with my Baby Momma, doing my thing, like spending time, but, yeah, I got to go, because I need to finish drawing a Sponge Bob for my little girl. Much love.

-Little Gambino LCERS

From The Beat: Happy Birthday! You've realized that you can do your program, go home and be free. We hope that when it's your little girl's birthday you'll be home with her and you can make cartoon characters together!

If I Could Be Invisible

If I could be temporarily invisible, I would go to the hood that I'm beefing wit' and scope them out, see what they be doing, where they keep they guns, and all that stuff, and listen to how they are going to get ya, you know, things like that, so I can stay ahead of the game.

-Lil' Carl LCERS

From The Beat: You could stay ahead of the game or you could choose to avoid the game altogether and walk away. Why not avoid or ignore people you're beefing with, so the mess will stop?

Pain

Slow Pain

It pains me to see my mom cry
It pains me to see my girl cry

Life is pain
Love is pain

Pain is bein' here on Mother's Day and you can't even kiss your mom

Pain is to be down with no way out

- Slow Pain LCERS

From The Beat: Why are your mother and girl crying? Is it because you're at the Ranch and they can't see you, be with you, whenever they want to? You often write that there's no way out, but every morning you wake up and have an infinite amount of choices. If you always make the same choice—the one that leads to a dead end, then there is no way out. But if you walk away from whatever is dead at heart, you can live with a whole lot of ways out and into another life!

A Home With Two Or Three Kids

To me the perfect home is where I can come home to a faithful, loving wife with about two or three kids. The perfect home that is in my mind is a two story house with five bedrooms.

-Queese B4

From the Beat: We like your description of a perfect home because it is focused around the people in it — the family you want to create — more than on what the house looks like (although you have an idea about that, too). What are you doing to make this dream come true?

Loco

I would like to be remembered as a guy who always been down for the 'hood. I would like them to remember me as a guy who never let the 'hood down, and when I go to Satan, I'm gonna claim my place.

-Slow Pain LCERS

From the Beat: You write about your 'hood and lifestyle every week, so your Beat readers already know who has your heart. Why do you feel like you're going to Satan someday? If you truly feel like whatever you're into will cause you to go to the devil, why not change whatever and be good to people? Do you love anyone who is not in your 'hood? Can you be good to them, too?

I Miss

In 2004 and 2005 I lost my brother and my mom. I really miss them very much. They were a part of my heart and they were my life. My mom was the one that gave me birth, the one that raised me since I was one. Man, I really miss my mom. She did everything for me, and when I say everything, I mean everything.

My brother was the one that gave me my nickname. My brother was only 19 when he died. He was doing a lot of bad things, and before he died he was to take me shopping. But when I called him the next day to see when he was going to pick me up, he was laying by dead, full of blood.

I know who killed my big brother. But it's okay because karma is a mug, and you also know that God don't like ugly.

-Ruby GU

From The Beat: No, God doesn't like ugly. So we know that you're not planning to do anything ugly in retaliation for your brother's death. We're sorry both your mom and your brother are gone. So now it's up to you to stay alive in order to keep their memories alive. What can you do in your life to show your mom the love and respect she deserves for all the sacrifices she made for you? Will you do it?

The Perfect Home

The perfect bedroom for me is having Sponge Bob sets all over my room, a toilet in my room, two big mirror in front of my bed, a bunk bed, with a hot tub, a Jacuzzi, a walk-in closet to go to the bathroom, a patio with a swimming pool in my backyard, five bedrooms, seven bathrooms, a bar, a strip club, and a balcony full of candy.

-Rodnika GU

From The Beat: That is a BIG room Rodnika! You might have to move out of the city to find a house with that big of a room. Why do you need five bedrooms? Who do you plan to have strip in your club? What kind of candy will fill your balcony?

The Perfect Home

My perfect home would be a mansion, the color of pink with 15 bedrooms, and seven bathrooms, and I want ma mama, my sister, my granny, my boyfriend, and etc...In everybody's room I want a flat screen, and I want their room of their choice. I want a swimming pool and a Jacuzzi in the backyard. I want a game room, computer room, and an exercise room.

I want a studio to make my first CD. I want a farm on one side, and on the other a racecar track. I want a roller coaster, and everything else my lil' sister and cousin would enjoy so they don't have to go anywhere. I also want a skating rink. I want seven scrapers and a Chrysler 300 for my grandma and my mama. I want marble floors and everything in my room. And of course my right hand room say Queela all over.

-Lameka GU

From The Beat: Sounds like the Playboy Mansion, but then of course, the Playboy Mansion is a lot bigger. But what you have in mind is big enough. Don't forget to invite us to your home when you get it! We'll take one of the smaller rooms (we don't need a big Jacuzzi...)

On My Back

I feel helpless sometimes when I am laying on my back.
But when I jump back and I'm go jump back.
But not with a strap or a gatt on my lap.
I'm go bounce back on my feet,
Not play my life or the pack-ass street.
Oh yes, I still go be smoking on my lil' weed,
but that just me.
So when you see me on my back,
just help me out.

-Big Worm B4

From The Beat: We like the fact that you acknowledge here that sometimes you're going to need help, and that you're asking for it. One of the problems we see a lot of young people have is that they think that asking for help is a weakness. We see it as a strength, so we give you props for demonstrating that strength. If you follow your own advice to stay off the street, then we can deal with that "lil' weed" thing later...

The Hall Makes My Smile Disappear

What makes my smile disappear is when I got arrested because I thought I was the shhh until I got locked up. While I'm in here, I have to watch my back almost every second when I'm not in my room. Some of the staff doesn't even act like they care. Like if you have a problem with someone or even a group of people and say, you want to switch units or something to avoid conflict or problems, all you can do is request a unit switch. Nine times out of ten the unit switch won't happen. That is also something that makes my smile disappear.

-Cordero B1

From The Beat: It sounds like you have only one solution to this problem, and that is to find a way to stay out of places like this. If being here is what stresses you out, and if both staff and other people in your situation are a problem for you, then avoiding the problem in the first place seems both wise and necessary. Any ideas about how you'd go about accomplishing that goal?

IREEN

I — Intelligent
R — Respectful
E — Electric
E — Excellent
N — Nice

-Irene GU

From The Beat: These are all great qualities, Ireen. Now, let's see if you can put them to your own good use to keep you out of places like this...

Trying To Leave

I am trying to leave from the halls. It's weak as hell. Now I am just waiting to leave.

-Sleepy B2

From The Beat: You're waiting to leave for where? You're waiting to leave for what? Leaving is the easy part. What are you planning to do once you leave so that you don't come back?

My Own Jets

If I had my own Jets I would put all the houses together and have about 200 rooms. The whole downstairs would be a big-ass swimming pool. The roof would be a big-ass game room with every game there is, and the rest of the house would be rooms and bathrooms.

-Ed'Ed GU

From The Beat: Sounds like a fun house... just don't forget us at The Beat when your dream house comes true! We love to swim and play games! (Do you like to swim?)

Man, I really miss my
mom. She did everything
for me, and when I
say everything. I mean
everything.

Love

I'm up in GU Girls' unit holding it down for the block. But hopefully I get out and make some big changes when I get out. I'm gon keep myself motivated and stay out of trouble so I could stay out of the system. But for all locked up keep yo' head up.

-Ireen GU

From The Beat: How can you be "holding it down for the block" and also planning to make big changes? What kind of changes are you planning to make Ireen? How can you hold it down for the block — doing whatever got you here to begin with — and, at the same time, claim you're about change? Which is going to be?

YGC

YGC is not cool at all because people do not like you at all because you are doing things they do not like at all. I do not like YGC because I cannot see my family, friends. YGC is not fun to be at because it is not good for you and me. YGC people do not like you at all. I want to see my mom at home not at YGC.

-Harvey B2

From The Beat: All juvenile halls are designed to make you want out and never come back! So, we're not surprised that you hate it here. Our question is, once you get out (and you will get out), what are you planning to change in your life so that you don't have to come here again?

Where Would I Be

Where would I be if I wasn't gone off some purple trees
I'd probably be going dumb or gettin' hyphy
I'm yah maine man puttin' yah to shame man
Going dumb wit' me an' ma bru, man
While I'm gone off these purple trees
All you hatas can't be me

Respect me
Please don't test me
I'm too hyphy
Check me!

You won't catch me wit'out the whole crew

-Funk Gurl GU

From The Beat: It's time that you checked yourself. All this silly boasting about who you are and what you're going to do... and all we see is a little girl being told what to do by a bunch of strangers. You can't sleep where you want; you can't eat what you want; you can't wear clothes that you want; you can't speak when you want... So go ahead, smoke those trees and threaten to be on top of your game. But be prepared to keep writing from behind four walls!

Get Your Papa

verse

Get your paper I'm tryin' to stack it major believe
I've been countin' this money since about the ages of three
And now I'm money motivated and I know how to get it
These money gettin' souljahs is the ones who helpin' me wit' it
I be sick wit' it when I be doin' the dummy
Beezies on me jus' because I got money
No, it isn't funny when you playin' wit' money
I'm a crazy-ass ninja, man don't take me for no dummy
I speak my mind when I'm spittin' these raps
Don't doubt me once main, when if I spit it write back
And these suckas is back to try and take what's rightfully mine
It's a design that makes you wanna jump and lose yo' mind
And its that heat that I verbally speak
It might be street while I'm running around getting chips
It nacho cheese man, so just leave it alone
As long I go home wit' my Newberry cologne
Hook
Get yout papa it' s a beautiful thing
Cashin' to the max amount and livin' up wit' your team
The American dream,
To sit on top of the world gamin' these freaks
Wit' cheeks and all some diamonds and pearls.

-Yung B4

From The Beat: Well let's take a quick look at where your money chase has led you... Hmmm... No girls on you... No diamonds and pearls, and all that's "rightfully yours" is a cell (oops, we mean room), county-issued drawers that some other boy was issued before you, all the food you can't eat, and the freedom to be told what to do every minute of the day. If this is the American dream, then we wonder what the American nightmare is...

Describing The Perfect Home

In my future, my description of the perfect home is a cool-sized house in the city, with three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a big garage, a pool and back yard, so in the future my kids can play at while I kick back watching a flat screen TV.

-Lil' Spitta B1

From The Beat: Who's going to watch the kids in the pool while you watch your flat screen TV? Do you like to swim? How long do you think it will take you to get the resources to put this plan into gear?

The Test

I think everybody get put to a test and some of us pass it and some of us don't pass. There's all types of tests out here if you in the streets. To all up in here, stay up. One love.

-Lgb B2

From The Beat: Are you passing your test? Tell us what tests you think you're passing and which you think you need to try again to pass...

My Test

S'up wit' 'em Beat? It's young Whiteboy! Well kinda right now it's one of my tests. If I could stand it I could, but I can't. It makes me mad as hell! But Whiteboy just thinking of how I could do better. Also when I go to my program, that's like the finals, 'cause if I do my time perfect, it's like I graduate, 'cause I gotta go home wit' no probation. So I need to pass 'cause if I don't, den I gotta go to da Ranch, Glen Mills, or George Jr.

So shhh, I gotta study for real for real! Hopefully young Whiteboy could stand it, 'cause if I do then I gets to be free! So Whiteboy gone try my hardest. So do ya test and Whiteboy gone

-Whiteboy B1

From The Beat: Well, at least you know what you have to do to pass your test. The only question is, are you up to doing what you know you must? We hope so, because you have a lot to give.

YGC

It is a lot of stupid people that come in YGC. Some are smart, not all are stupid. I was in class today and the teacher asked us to write about your dream girl and some people could not even do that or might they were so-called playing. But if you had a chance to have your dream girl, what would she look like and what would she be like?

As the days go on in unit B2 in YGC, I wish I can go to GU at least one time to be around some girls. Some say that some of the girls are ugly, but I want to see for myself.

-Fat-Rat B2

From The Beat: We've seen the staff, and they have a lot of nerve calling the girls ugly! Anyway, if you want to see girls, we advise you not to do it in juvenile hall, but to get yourself out of the hall. Everybody is ugly when they're slaves!

Making Money

Ninjas want to win if they could. If a ninja got to take three or four bullets fo' thirty thousand Gs, I would. You can't even walk down the street and see a penny and don't pick it up 'cause the ninja walking behind you gone pick it up if you don't.

The game is all about money. You can sell dope or make a ninja put his face on the ground and it's getting hella thick. You can have yo' main girl on the stroll man it's rob. I'm gone stay in the game until a ninja hit me wit' the whole clip.

-Lil' P B1

From The Beat: Yeah, the game is all about money, and you just keep pouring into the system's pockets! Each time you come here, you make the system richer and stronger — and you make yourself poorer and weaker. Here you sit (again) counting money you don't have and talking about "yo' main girl" when you're surrounded by nothing but boys. When are you going to wake up to reality?

I'm Out Finally

I might get out on the 13th so hopefully I go to this group home in Stockton so I out dis hole for good. I have 18 months. When I get out of the group home I'm off probation for good. I'm going to study hard and be on the block with the homies.

-Junebug B1

From The Beat: If you plan to go back to the block with the homies, what makes you think you're out of here for good or that you're going to be off probation for good? You might be out for a minute and off probation for a minute, but going back to doing whatever you were doing is a prescription for doing more time. When you say you're going to study hard, do you mean you're going to go back to school? That's the promise we hope you keep, because that's the plan that will keep you free.

Perfect Home

A perfect home is when everybody get along in yo' household, and have fun, and have a nice-size house like a five bedroom with a pool and a basketball court in this house.

-Patrick B1

From The Beat: It sounds like a dream house, all right. Do you like to swim? Are you good at basketball? What do you think you have to do in order to actually see this dream house become a reality?

Life In Hell

This hell we live in is full of thugs
So you can't be scared

Fear nobody but God

Bow down to nobody

Just 'cause they got a gun

And if you want out of the dirt

Then go to church

Or stay in the game

And put in work

I've lived around killas all my life

And ain't fear nobody gun or knife

I was raised wit' a gun

And had to use it

But if a ninja put his hand on ma head

He gone wish he was dead

While other ninjas be sleeeppin'

I be creepin'

'Cause I ain't gone let nobody

Sneak up on me

'Cause I gone ride

'Til I die

-Lil' P B1

From The Beat: We hope someone is impressed by your commitment to "ride til I die" because we definitely are not impressed. We just see this childish notion leading you back to lock-up, and that with each commitment, you get deeper into the system. Finally, without a change in your attitude, we see you doing a long, long stretch of your life under the control of people who don't really care much about you at all. But since you're giving them all the control they need over your life, we're not even sure you care much about yourself at all. Just exactly what do you mean when you say you fear God? Does your fear of God prevent you from doing anything? Does it require you to do anything? Or, is your fear of God only an empty statement showing that you have more love of the streets than of God, and more fear of the streets than of God? That's how we read it. How do you read it?

Some People Think It's Wrong

Some people think it's wrong to rob, sell dope, and have guns. To me, I don't think it's wrong because it's just ghetto life, and me, I live ghetto life. But where I come from, almost everybody sells drugs, so that's where I get it from. I don't know nothing else but get money the hard way.

-Lil' P B1

From The Beat: The "hard way" is right. Your method of getting money leads you here, and how much money are you making here? Oh, excuse us, you ARE making money here, except that all of it is going into the pockets of those who work in the system. Just keep doing what you're doing, and you'll make a lot of employees of YGC happy because you're putting money in their pockets while doing nothing to prepare yourself to put legitimate money in your own pockets (by going to school and preparing yourself to do the kind of work that doesn't lead to your own slavery!

The Perfect House

I would love to have a perfect, a perfect house. In our house we have to share all the food with at least 20 people. I be coming home hungry. There be no food on the table. I got to find a pack of Top Ramen noodles, and if I don't find some, I got to ask my grandma, "What's for dinner?"

She would say, "I'm not cooking," or, "Fried chicken." Whenever my grandma cooks chicken or any other food, you can only get one piece. I would like a house where we have a whole lot of many so we can get the late play station before another one comes out. And if we had more money we would have enough money for everybody to get seconds of grandma fried chicken.

-Pancho B1

From The Beat: We think it's strange that you put getting a play station ahead of getting enough of your grandma's cooking so that you could have seconds. Besides chicken, what else does your grandma cook? Has she taught you to cook anything? Like what?

The Thieving Fly On The Wall

I wish I was invisible. I would steal a lot of things I want. I would get everything. I will get cars and drive them and would wear my clothes. I would steal all the money from the stores. I would steal motorcycles. I would buy food after.

-Marquis B1

From The Beat: What we want to know is if you're a fly on the wall, how are you going to drive those stolen cars, wear those stolen clothes, or take off on those stolen motorcycles? Well, you can enjoy the food — and whatever else flies eat!

Perfect Home

A perfect home for me would have my sexy-ass girlfriend that I call sexy Nemo. We would have at least five kids. Our bedroom would be bigger than two YGC classrooms. Our house would be in Atlanta and I'll only come back to SF to take care of business from time to time. Our kids will create their own rooms and our guest house would be on a big-ass plane so we can chase the sun, have fun while everyone sits on their asses like bums.

-Boombada B4

From The Beat: Sounds like a great house and a great life, but are you really willing to risk all of that to come back to SF to "take care of business"? What kind of business would you need to be taking care of all the way from Atlanta?

A Fly On The Wall

If I was invisible I would see what's good with my PO in my case. 'Cause if I would've known about it, I would've turned myself in so I could of got out quicker.

-D-Boy B2

From The Beat: We don't quite get this, D-Boy. What is it that you wish you knew ahead of time so that you could have turned yourself in? What kept you from doing that to begin with?

The Test

Yeah, what's really good? Like man it's ya boy young JRF Baby, ya dig? Damn Beat, but yeah, my hardest test I think for all is me completing my probation, ya dig. I really think that's hard 'cause they try to keep you away from ya family and friends, you feel me. For example, a playa like me.

They shipped ya boy off, feel me. Did about eight months. Had six more to go. Couldn't finish it 'cause I was missin' da 'hood and shhh, feel me. So I got on. Now I gotta do a whole n'other year, feel me. But yeah, that's probably my hardest test.

-Jr B2

From The Beat: So you only had six months to go, but you decided you couldn't handle it and now you're doing another year! You ran because you missed the 'hood, and now you'll be away for at least twice as long! Is there a lesson to be learned here, or do you still need to do some more growing up before you recognize what that lesson might be?

The Test

I feel like from the time I walk out the house I am being tested. I am being tested because statistics are set for me to fail in life. It's a test every time I pass a Asian lady walking the street clutching her purse. Will I snatch it or keep it movin'? It's a test when I am posted on the block wit' the homies and the boys dip up. Will I run 'cause I am packin' or put my hands up to prove my innocence? It's a test within my self whether I can make it in this society. Being locked up in juvenile hall, I am failing.

-Tha Kid B2

From The Beat: Unfortunately, we have to agree with you that being locked up is not a sign of success. But at the same time, if you know that, then you can do something about it. If you hang on the block, if you stay packin', if you put yourself in that situation where, when "the boys dip up" you can end up locked up (or toes up), then you can't be passing those tests you talk about. So, if the statistics say you're going to fail, then what are you going to do to beat those statistics?

Fly On The Wall

If I could be a fly on the wall I would be on my PO's wall so I could hear what she says about me and my family. And I would be on the judge's wall so I could hear what they say about me when I leave the court.

-D-Role B2

From The Beat: What do you imagine your PO is saying about you when you're not in the room? What do you think she's telling the judge about you?

This Is To My Little Bro

I remember when I used to be outside of these walls when I used to be with my family and friends and always play with my little brother. When I was outside, I always used to think that playing with my brother was annoying, but now that I'm in here, I miss that.

But the most thing I miss is being with my whole family. And another thing is eating some good-ass food from outside you already know what I'm talking about. But this is for my little brother that I miss a lot. I just can't wait until I get out of here and play with him like he tells me in the phone.

-Jr B1

From The Beat: We hope you get to go home and soon and be the big brother your little bro' needs. Tell us, why did you allow yourself to be taken away from him to begin with? We know you weren't thinking of him when you were out there doing whatever it is that got you here, so what makes you think that when you get out this time you'll put his needs ahead of your own? Until you do that — until you see that how you live your life is how he will live his life — you can count on more of the same consequences you are now facing. It's all up to you, but for your brother's sake, we hope you make the changes you know you have to make.

It's Gotta Be Big

My perfect home is to have my family there and all my pets. A perfect backyard as big as a football field, a big-ass bedroom, a big-ass dining room, big-ass bathroom etc. That turns a house into a home the end.

-Daniel B2

From The Beat: All we can say is there seem to be a lot of big asses in that home of yours!

The Test

I have taken a lot of tests in my life, but I'm goin' to tell you about dis one test. I was at school and I got out of school and I went down town. I seen my cousin an' some shhh happen. The police stopped us and took us to the station. They took me in the room and started askin' shhh. And the point is I passed my test and all y'all ninjas try'n live dat street life, y'all betta get ready.

-D-Role B2

From The Beat: We're always curious to know what it means when people write, "... some shhh happen." How did it happen? Did you have anything to do with making it happen, or were you just a passive observer? And if you passed your test, what are you doing here?

The Beat Within

Right now I feel like I ain't getting' no respect beyond my expectations from no one individual. Plus I feel like I'm not earning a damn thing in these schools. And according to my life, no one really give a damn about me other than me, so I feel like I'm on my own in this complicated world.

My father got killed over some dumb-ass shhh. So now I'm a orphan and a young black man growing up without a real father figure. And I also feel that me as a African-American I should have higher expectations for myself. Because if I don't have higher expectations of myself then I won't have any achievements. And some more things I'm feeling is it really worth it.

-Smoke B4

From The Beat: We're sorry about your father. We hope the tragedy that took his life will help you to avoid some of those "dumb-ass" situations and decisions that can lead to such permanent consequences as death! You're totally right about having expectations for yourself. It really doesn't matter what others think you are capable of, or what they expect from you. If you have low or no expectations for yourself, then that's what you will achieve. So tell us, what are your hopes for yourself, besides getting out of here? We hope they include finishing school, because that can be the difference between failure and success. Since no one can predict the future, we can't tell you whether you'll achieve any or all of your dreams or not, but we can tell you that going after those dreams in a way that keeps you safe and free is what makes it "really worth it."

More Of The Same

Dear Beat, what's good? It's yo' boy, Chuck. I get out next week. I'm going back to the 'hood with my homies, go to school, try to get A's. I from the ghetto, baby.

-Chuck B1

From The Beat: We took out more than half of this piece, Chuck — the half that tells us you are making your plans to return to the hall. We applaud your desire to go back to school and get A's, but committing yourself to going back to the homies on the street cancels it out. We think you'll be back here real soon, so we'll keep a place open for you. Why don't you try to prove us wrong!

Needing A Real Education

Man I feel like I'm locked in a cage where you are a dog and you are messing in your own pot, man. I also feel that I'm being put to a test that they want me to fail. I also feel that it's less real humans out in the public nowadays. And sometimes I feel that I don't need to be here with these kiddy-minded kids that I'm here with.

I think I should be at home with my family going to public school, not a lock-down center. I need to get a real education to succeed in life and stay out the system. I feel that the teachers ain't teaching us nothing.

-P-Nutty B2

From The Beat: What is it that you think you're not getting from your teachers now? Are you doing anything to educate yourself while you have all this time? Are you reading? What do you like to read? Remember, education is something that never ends as long as you're about getting it!

Learning From The Past

I've been doing a lot to show people that I am determined to succeed in this life, but they keep bringing up my past. My past has taught me to do something different. I will not make the same mistakes as I did. I want to survive the positive way — get a job, a license to drive, and an education, a trade too. I want everything to be good.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: When people bring up your past, CITO, you should simply acknowledge it and go on to explain that it is because of your past that you want to make some basic changes in your life. If people can't understand that, then they are beyond understanding. We know that you are now out of the hall and on your way to that new life you want, so we want to wish you all the luck in the world.

Go Home To Your Mom

I will like to go home to my mom because I love her and I will love to see her and go home and have a good time and have fun. Go home to see my mom is fun because I can have fun and go to school and be good at school. I miss my mom but I cannot see her. I love my mom and I will go see her at home or at work because I love her so must. I want to get out and get home to see my mom and my family.

YGC is not cool at all for people at come to. Home is fun to be at because people at home you can have fun with. But YGC people do not like you at all. I will love to see my mom now because I miss her. Mom I love you and I will love to come see you at home.

-Harvey B2

From The Beat: We can see that you love and miss your mom. But Harvey, whatever you did to put yourself here was — at least at that time — more important than your mom, or you wouldn't have done it. Do you miss your mom enough to stop doing whatever it was that brought you here? The answer to that will come once you're free. That's when words count for nothing and actions count for everything!

My Perfect Puerto Rican Home

A perfect home to me would be a place away from all this shhh that is happening and the home would be back in Puerto Rico. The people that I would have there would be me, my sister, my mom, my dad, and my grandparents. My bedroom would be the sickest place out of the whole house. I would have a big flat screen TV that covers one side of the room and I would have all game systems and all the games. That would be the perfect home to me.

-Mike B4

From The Beat: Have you been to Puerto Rico? Were you born there? It's a beautiful place. Do you think that you will outgrow the games you'd like to put in your room? What's your favorite?

Getting Into The Wrong Car

I wish I was invisible when I got in the car with my boys 'cause I didn't do nothing, but I'm doing this time for getting in the car after they robbed someone and didn't tell me nothing about it. If I was invisible, I would not be here.

-De'Andre B1

From The Beat: Of course, if you were invisible, then your friends would not have seen you to ask you to get into the car. Be honest with us (and with yourself), if your boys had told you that they had just robbed someone and had bread to spend, would you have told them, "Oh, that's all right, I'll catch you next time," or would you have climbed into the car anyway? In the end, it's on you to know who to hang with (and who not to), and when (and when not to).

Man, I'm Locked Up!

Man, I'm back up in this lousy place. I was doin' hella good in that punk-ass Walden House. Man that's all I can say. I really thought I was going to be able to go home and be with my baby and my baby daddy. Man oh man, I can't believe I'm in this bs place that I have to rest my head.

I could have been going home getting my shhh together, and getting my dip. I might be only 17 but let me tell you this, I get mine and take care of myself. Please believe when I get mine, I get mine. I just made a stupid mistake by keeping it real. But hey, that's what I do, keep it real. Can you dig it!

-Jeannie M GU

From The Beat: If "Keeping it real" means returning to the halls, then maybe you should redefine what "real" is. We're not really impressed by your statement that you get yours. All we see is that "yours" is being under the control of strangers telling you everything you have to do and everything you can't do. If you just made a "stupid mistake" that got you kicked out of Walden House and into lock-up, then it's time to rethink everything you're doing. Don't blame the system for your own mistakes. Check yourself, or prepare to get used to being a slave. Your choice.

My Perfect Home

My perfect home would be nothing really outrageous, just something for me. My house wouldn't be in San Francisco. I would probably move far away to like New York or something, in a penthouse, with two bedrooms. I got a lot of clothes and shoes so I would probably use a room for those things. I have never been able to be on my own, so you know it would be me and me, nobody else. I don't know how to explain how my bedroom and everything else would be. You would just have to see, 'cause I'm gone make it happen. For real. I'm done talkin'.

-Muck GU

From The Beat: Muck, why New York? Would your penthouse have a hot tub, too? What else will you have? As long as you are willing to work hard and keep your mind at it, we know you will make this happen. And then you can invite us over. We've always wanted to see a New York penthouse.

Not All Fun And Games

On my way to the medical center, up in You Got Caught 9YGC. It's lightweight crackin' for real, my little ninjas in here. My boyfriend and some old ones too. But this really ain't the place to for real.

When you at rec it's all fun and games till you go back to room. When that doors are shut and that night-light comes on, it ain't crackin' no more. This ain't what's up so I'm back to the future doing right!

-Cash Money GU

From The Beat: So, let's hear more about that "doing right" when you go back to the future... What is "doing right" to you, and why did it take you coming to jail to realize that doing wrong interferes with your life?

War Is Stupid

War is stupid to me. Like I live in Hunters Point and beef is started over record deals... It's just no matter what their age is they get killed over petty stupid things. You know I can't explain it, I don't know.

-Darlene GU

From The Beat: We had to take all the names of spots or turf out of this piece — and that was more than half of it! But we agree with you that war is stupid, whether it's on the streets of Hunters Point or the streets of Baghdad!

Controlling My Anger

The main test that I have in here is controlling my anger. A lot of things get me upset, and I'm good at controlling myself, but...

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Since you're already out, you probably won't be reading this, so we'll keep it short. Controlling your anger is a very important goal. We're glad you're doing it, but don't get tripped up by your "but"...

The Hardest Test

I took a few hard tests, physically and mentally. What is it? Stuff I've gone through in life. My teenage life, being a little dad, and last but not least, the GAME.

Now, survivin' being a dad was kinda hard. I wasn't there when he came but still I succeed by still having her love, care, and fairness. I also succeeded by doing what a dad does — buy him clothes, shoes, anything he needs. He light weight almost a year.

So my teenage was nothing. School was cool, girls was cool, place was cool and everything. Now my teenage life goes with the game. How? I got in the game at the age of ten. Took many tests in the game. Earning respect was nothing, and getting away with stuff was a little hard. Why? Because the only way for me to get away with stuff was coming here. Then it took me four times coming here to realize I need to get my life together and get on the road I was on before 5th grade and set my ass out of a situation I cant. Only if I move somewhere or die. That's it.

-Uce-B B4

From The Beat: This is kind of mysterious, Uce, because you make it sound like things are okay for you, that you've learned enough not to want to come back here, that you are going to be a responsible father, etc., but then you come at us with that ending that says you'll be in the game till you move or die! That's harsh! But if that's true, then we hope you're looking at how and where to move. Will you be part of your son's life (more than just buying him clothes)? We don't know what your long-term relationship to your baby mama is, but we do know that children need fathers and mothers, and by "need" we mean to be there with them, to guide them, to give them the benefit of your experiences, both good and bad. You have a lot to give, both to your son and to others, so we hope you find a way out of the game.

Dream

Well if I had a dream house I would live in Atlanta so I could get a big house because my granny said it also cheap down there. So I want a big white house. Inside I want five bedrooms, three bath, a big living room with black carpet and white and black stripe couches and Scarface pictures in my dining room. My pool table gone be all black with white writin' in the middle that say, "It is what it is," and white pool balls and a pool out front. It have white chairs with back umbrellas.

I want a Dalmatian named "Chedda" with a black and white doggy house. And second but not least, my room. I'm gone have black carpet a white marble bed — spend at least 6 Gs on my set, with the matching dresser and my modeling pictures in frames while you walking up my stairwell — glass stairs.

And my closet full of high heels, hella clothes, coats, fur coats, and etc... My kitchen is black and white marble tile floor and a white refrigerator with black designs and hella food and black Benz on 18" and white Lamborghini on dubs and my regional car an all-black Range Rover with black tints and on 24's.

-Darlene GU

From The Beat: One thing's for sure, you really like the colors black and white. Everything in your description of your dream house and even your car is white and black. You've described a very high-class (expensive) dream here, but if you put your mind to and work for it, your dream house might just become your reality house. Of course, it might be that as you get older, you'll redesign this dream. Either way, good luck!

Baby Boy Demon

Daddy gone

Ain't never shown his face for 12 years

Only three years since I've been born

That's how it is raised in the 'hood

Suckas try to post like it's good

Ain't no food in the house, young siblings staving

Baby mommas need money, but they don't get it

'Cause they baby daddies is ballin'

Temper short but my presence is known

One of the youngest

But I walk around like I'm grown

Ain't no thing for me to do

The beef is on so we isn't cool

Suckas think they hard since they come to jail

I've been back to evil places many times and they call it hell

He cast me down to the burrow of the place

Fire in his eyes, and blood dripping' down his face

He tells me, "It will be quick" and he sense my fear

I laugh coldly, and tell him I'm the head honcho in here
Told as a youngster I was a demon and had demon eyes and demon ways

They don't call me Lila' Shadow for nothing girls and boys

I'll hop on line and treat all you suckas like toys

I'll like to take you down through my dark past

To you it might be scary, but to me it will make me laugh

I isn't done yet, I'm burning up like a fiery hell

The gongs ring and also the church bells

Been on this road for too long

The youngest in B4, but I still push a hard line, homes

I'm made for the pinto, that's what my Tao Capone says

Dinkies, white tee, and bandana pressed

Air Force Ones going hard

I'm blockade

I'm gone but wait till next week

In this hell hole the baby boy demon is back.

-Lila' Shadow B4

From The Beat: Whoever told you when you were a child that you were a demon with demon eyes was probably the same person that told you about Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny — all lies! You are no more demon than any other human being on earth — which means that you have within you the potential to display the worst of human nature (the demon) and the potential to display the best of human nature (the divine). What you are is a young man dealing with an environment of violence and "war" without any of the resources a just society would provide for you to overcome those obstacles. The real "demon" is not the kids born into circumstances like that, but the society (us) that allows those circumstances to flourish. You take much too much pride in being thought of as a "demon" — and it is that pride in your "reputation" that will bring you down if you don't check yourself. You may be bound for the pinto, but not because you were made for it. You were made for something much greater and better than that, but in either case, you're the one who holds your future in your hands (not the Devil, not your Tao Capone, not your homiest or the system — you!) We had to take quite a few lines out of this poem, the ones that either threatened others or built yourself up as some kind of super demon. Take a good hard look at yourself and your situation. What do you see? We see a young man caught in a web that he didn't spin, but which he has to untangle himself from before he's eaten alive!

How My Dreads Go' Be When I Get Out

When I get out, the first thing I'm going to do is get my dreads hit, and you already know they go' be stubby. I'm go' get them dyed the day after, and the colors go' be black, then blond, and lime green tips. I'm a have my grill—ten at the top and bottom, wit' 40 diamonds, an' 40 green rubies in each fang, and all princess cuts. And I'm go' be on another level and hustle—that ain't go' get me caught up again. But I can't tell y'all what that is, yadidamean?

-Henny

From The Beat: This is a hilarious description of what you'll look like on the outs, Henny! Now you're so dark, silent, mysterious, huge-eyed, as if you're always observing whatever is around you, absorbing and learning from it. But did you stop to think about what you wrote before you wrote it? You've given any and all the authorities who'll be out on the streets when you get out a pretty good description of yourself. Let's hope that what ever this hustle of yours is isn't something illegal. And also you need to get back in school and get some of that kind of game in your head instead of filling up on that "go stupid movement" stuff. The future is what you make or create for yourself... don't be amongst the losers.

Riley Dumpin' At Santa Claus

My favorite cartoon character is Riley from The Boondocks, because he go dumb and he dumpin' at Santa Claus and he just go dumb, period.

-Janus

From The Beat: Riley is the little kid who always gets into mischief and says the wrong thing because he doesn't know any better, right? He is funny. Does he remind you of you? If so, how?

What's In My Way

The things that get in my way is that dummie juice. Every time I get my hands on it, I end up in handcuffs for fighting or stealing cars. It's hard to leave the dummie juice alone.

-Cuervo

From The Beat: What do you think it would be a good solution? Stop drinking, hurting your liber, and getting into trouble.

Hella Mad

Shhh. I'm hella mad. I thought I was gonna leave on Monday. I'm tired of these probation officers hyphn' up ma head. I'm still here waitin'. Been here since July, an' now it's 'bout to be September.

I'm hella mad, but to everybody readin' The Beat, keep yo' heads up. Don't let these probation officers keep yo' heads down.

-Angelica

From The Beat: You must feel like you've lost control over your life when you can't get out of juvy when the system promised you you could. Has your probation officer given you an explanation about the delay? Is it a problem with paper work? Are you going home? To a group home? Will you be going to school when you leave? We hope so. And now that you realize how bad things can get in there we're sure you've made a plan on what you need to do to keep from going back, right?

Off To Placement

Off to placement is where I'm going. It's coo', I guess, but it don't really matter to me, because then I'm off probation, so it's all good. I don't know where I'm going, though. Nowhere far, I'm assuming—probably a house in Santa Rosa. I heard it was coo', but I don't know. I ain't trippin', just gettin' done. Only six-seven months. I can do it. So wish me luck.

-Playa Joey

From The Beat: You sound okay about going to placement. Santa Rosa isn't too far away, so maybe the house you'll be staying in will be in the woods and it will be a good program. Will you go to school? We hope so. You know we wish you terrific luck! Complete the program. The program is only as good as you make it!

Maybe I'm Going To The Y

What it don't do? This yo' boy, James, hella bored, sittin' in this weak hall. I go back to court soon. I might be doing five years in the Y an' I just can't wait to get this shhh over with.

-James

From The Beat: You've been through a lot going through the legal process, haven't you? Going to the Y can be pretty heavy. You should read everything you can get your hands on, draw, get to know the other youth in there, play basketball outside, because your privileges in the Y may be very restricted. It's not easy doing time. Right now you only have to deal with being isolated from the outside world but the Y is a whole world of its own and your worries become something totally different from what they are now. We hope that if you going to the Y isn't set in stone that things turn out better for you. Whatever the outcome is never give up on yourself.

My Mom And Little Brother Keep Me Strong

What's making me strong is my mom, because she really loves me with all her heart and that what's keeping me strong. And my little brother that I really love with all my heart, and we close, too.

-Marcos

From The Beat: You're lucky to have such a beautiful family who supports and loves you. It seems like the only piece missing from this family is you. Don't you think so?

I Ain't Got Nothin' To Say Today!

Oh, yeah, to The Beat,

You talkin' 'bout ya don't want us to write love letters, and then ya going to talk boo boo after my poems and then the one poem I wrote you wanna know 'bout dude. Man, you is bunk.

-Diabla

From The Beat: We're sorry if there is some misunderstanding, we at The Beat want you to send any love letters you write to whomever you wrote them to, not give them to us, because basically what you write should be private between the two of you. Also, unfortunately, no one can write about anyone else in his or her unit or in any other juvy, because that is all of your business and we have to protect that. But almost any other writings you create, we'll be happy to publish! And what's bunk is that although you know the rules we set down every time we come to Marin you chose not to follow those guidelines and then you complain when you don't see what you wrote. That's your fault... and now you blame The Beat for your mistake... THAT'S BUNK! Keep it real!

The Pain I Went Through

What's up, Beat? This is Joker. The thing I want to forget is all the pain I went through. I hate that feeling—every time I see the things I go through, it hurts so much. Every time it hurts more and more every time.

-Joker

From The Beat: Joker, what have you been through that is causing you so much pain? Whatever or whomever is hurting you still doing it? If so, how can you make it stop? Do you talk to anyone about it? Have you been the cause of any of the "suffering" you're going through? Have you been the cause of the pain others feel or are feeling at any point in your life? You're still breathing, still standing up, still thinking. Without a foe a soldier never knows his own strength! Press on.

Read If You Believe In God!

In the loudness of the world, I screamed to make my way
I strove and fought and struggled, not knowing I was clay
I went to work and got ahead, to speak to all one day
"Look what I've done, look who I am, hear what I have to say"
I strove for many things from men, like money and respect
I pierced myself with many sins, went where the harsh wind swept
I felt a twinge of pain sometimes, but ignored it to be heard
I wanted all the world would give, I'd take it if I could
My wounds got larger, deeper, as I shouted all the more
I was getting it all, the things I wanted, the world became my store
In the stillness of my heart, my wounds began to ache
And I grew colder as I bled, the love in me would wait
I didn't understand and said it was not me
Men told me of how good I was, in men I would believe
I went to church, I heard the word, and left it on that pew
And then I went into the world, and did as I wanted to
I met a man of nothing, a poorer man than I
He told that my riches were meaningless
And then He told me all about myself: He said I needed Him
I laughed at that old ragged man, what could He do for me?
He had no place to rest his head, and I was one of plenty
It was then I looked into His eyes, and saw His love for me
It was then my eyes were opened, my wounds in me to see
I felt the pain deep in my heart, of the things that I have done
I saw the wounds within my soul, of how the world had won
I saw the love I laid aside, as I struggled to be heard
And I saw hope that never died, the lovely precious word
The things I had meant nothing then, they were meaningless to me
With my life, I chased the wind, because I couldn't see
I wanted what I could not keep; I thought I knew my needs
I compared myself to other men, men just as blind as me
Deep in the eyes of that old man, I saw eternity
I saw the face of love that day; I knew He came for me
I could not stand in His bright light, but asked on bended knee
If He would heal my bleeding wounds, and my heart so I could see
I never saw that man again, but the voice I hear is He
I asked His name, He said, "I am. I have called you near to me"
I do not lose my sheep," He said, "Nor let them stray far from me"
I am the Beginning and the End, and my glory you will see"
I see his rod and staff sometimes, as I slowly walk my days
I hear his quiet voice sometimes, as he teaches me his ways
I walk his path of hills and valleys, sometimes not knowing where
And when he leads me by quiet waters, I know that he is there
The things of the world seem rusty; the wind seems not so strong
I find that I am silent now, as I slowly walk along
And when I see the dark clouds form, and when the storms begin
"Abba, Father, are you there?" I ask, and then I hear, "I am"

-Smiley

From The Beat: Where did this poem come from, Smiley? Is the old man Jesus? If you're talking about Him, we hope you follow His love, guidance and keep the faith in Him in a high level. Are you the "I"? What wounds have you had? Who is Abba?

DWIGHT ABBOTT

DWIGHT ABBOTT

This is the third and last part of a chapter in Dwight Abbott's second book, tentatively called "Consequences." (His first book "I Cried, You Didn't Listen," about growing up in the CYA in the 1950s has just been republished by AK Press, and is available from Amazon.com and through The Beat.) This second book will describe the life this OG experienced in prison. Part 1 described the brutality reality in the dark, forbidding world of solitary confinement. Part 2 ends sadly with the death of his only "friend" - a sewer rat named Warden! And part 3... well, here the racist prisoner that Dwight Abbott became gets a humbling lesson about humanity. The author (who writes for The Beat under the name SunMan'sLight from his cell at Salinas Valley State Prison) wants to hear from as many Beat readers as possible, both about your reactions to the entire 3-part series as well as your suggestions for a title. We'll make sure he receives all of your comments.

Consequences: Chapter 1, Part 3

There was a time I thought I could keep track of individual days passing, but no more. I lost interest, and time sort of marched on without me. though I continued to listen as the rats came to visit and eat the food I left out, which was now most of my rations, I made no attempt to interact. I did not talk with them, did not again speak aloud to myself, nor did I respond to my guards who apparently satisfied themselves I was there and breathing each time they picked up the empty paper plates I left at the narrow door slot.

Warden's death left me much more depressed than I had been at the beginning when I was kidnapped, taken to another state, and placed inside solitary confinement without benefit of legal representation. Insanity became an inviting option; was it to be my escape?

I suppose because I was no longer talking, discussing their mother's sexual preferences and habits, the guards had no motivation to shower me. (I hear today, some 30 years later, in Iraq it's called "Water Boarding.") my hair became so thickly matted I could no longer run my fingers through. I would scrape the caked dirt from my face and arms where there were now sores from which I obsessively picked the scabs. Sometime back, I had torn from my underwear a strip of cloth, which I used to wipe what teeth I had left after the beating. They were beginning to ache. I guess you could say I was a bit of a mess.

“How long has it been? How many years? It’s got to be at least two years since I killed Warden.” I pulled on my bard that had not seen a razor at this time. “When do I call it quits? Dying has got to be much easier than living, existing, like this.”

As I dozed off, for the ten thousandth time, I asked myself these questions. It was making less and less sense to continue on. I felt I had traveled full circle: nobody heard me when I cried out as a child, and for damn sure, nobody is listening now. "All I have to do is climb the bars as high as I can go, and drop head first onto the concrete. That should do it... What if it didn't?"

Something awakened me. A sound! I sat up and remained perfectly still as I listened intently. "What the hell was that? Come on you bastards, let's end it now!"

The large window shutter creaked slowly open. Immediately, I rolled off my now thin, tattered blanket and pulled it over my head as I scooted to the far back corner of the cell preparing for the water I was convinced could rip skin from my body. "Why don't you come in... get it done?"

“Hey, Abbott,” a guard whispered. I did not respond. “Hey, do you want a smoke?” I remained silent. “I’m going to leave this here,” he whispered again. “I’ll close the flap later.”

Once I could no longer hear his footsteps, I peaked out from under the now forever-damp and moldy blanket. The light affixed to the ceiling directly outside my cell brilliantly shone, hurting my eyes. For the first time in nearly three years, I was able to see the bars and the wall beyond them, the solid steel door, and the window that had been tightly sealed all this time.

Slowly, I rolled the Buglar tobacco into two cigarettes. I split each paper match up the center making four matches from the two. As I struck one of the matches, and lit my first cigarette in years, the flame revealed the back of my hands were nearly black with the dirt from a cell not cleaned in over three years, other than whatever was accomplished

when I was “showered.” I puffed, deeply inhaled the smoke into my lungs, and choked. I learned against the cell wall to steady myself as the burning tobacco aroma momentarily overpowered the odor of urine, feces and mold.

Several hours would pass before I again heard brass keys striking one another. I moved to the back of the cell, and stood in the shadows looking out, the blanket nearby just in case. The sound of footsteps told me there was but one guard. He appeared at the window, but the brightness of the light behind him kept me from seeing his darkly shadowed face.

"You get caught with that stuff, I could get into a lot of trouble... The guys out front send theirs." He closed the flap, sealing me back into darkness.

So began a strange relationship between the guard and me that was to last nearly a year. Five nights a week - I would learn his shift was from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. - quietly as he could, he would open the shutter, ask me how I was doing, ask if I needed anything, and each time after receiving no response, he would drop a white, paper packet onto the cell floor and walk off.

For several months, this was our routine. I wanted to wash myself, shower, shave, but that would not be possible. I could not ask and place him in an awkward position. How would it appear should my daytime tormentors discover I was clean? Besides, I had doubt I could speak at all. I had not said so much as one word aloud since Warden's death.

One night, my guard again asked if I needed anything, and to both our shock and surprise, I spoke with a voice deep and grating.

"How about a pencil?"

There was a moment of silent contemplation. "Why do you want it?"

“Write on the walls.”

"I can give it to you, but you must give it back when I close the shutter."

"Okay."

Each night after, he would leave me with the packet of tobacco, a stump of a pencil that was, possibly, two inches long. Amongst the years of graffiti at the front of the cell, I would find spots where I could write poems and other thoughts that I will not share here.

When I ran out of wall, I began writing on sheets of toilet paper. With that began a sort of diary - something in which could write what I could not voice. From that "diary" would evolve my first book, I Cried, You Didn't Listen. (Here, I would like to thank the Oregon Department of Corrections for its cheap "inmate issue" toilet paper, similar to that used to wrap gifts. Without it, I likely would never have begun my writing career.)

Without fail, each night the guard would bring back to me the paper upon which I had already written, a thick stack of fresh toilet paper, a freshly sharpened pencil stub, and a small packet containing tobacco, two matches, and three rolling papers, all of which he dropped to the floor.

One night the guard told me, "This is my last week here. What do you want me to do with the stuff you wrote?"

For the very first time, I stepped from the shadows in which I stood each time he came to the cell, and where I would remain until he left. For the second time, I spoke.

"I have a name and address. Would you mail it to her?"

"Yes."

“Thank you.”

"You're welcome."

His last night, I returned the pencil and paper along with an address. One last surprise. I watched him stretch his arm through the window offering his hand. I hesitated, stepped closer, and as I reached my hand out to grasp his, I was stunned (far more than one might imagine, with good reason) to see I was holding a hand much blacker than the years of ground-in dirt caused mine to appear.

"I'm really dirty."

"No matter."

I did not learn his name. It was not important. He was a man whose word was good; he mailed off my toilet paper manuscript.

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Not too long after, maybe a couple months, I do not really know, for the first time every window shutter was opened allowing the outside light to flood the entire cell. Sitting against the back wall, holding the blanket, the shadow that always before hid me had disappeared.

"I am Correctional Counselor Fletcher, Abbott. We are going to take you out of there so that we can talk. How do you feel about that?"

Under the blanket that covered my entire body, I remained silent.

"I assure you none of us are here for any other reason than to get certain matters resolved."

Silence.

"I know you are not in good physical shape. We'll get you a doctor, get you taken care of. You need someone to talk with; I will make that happen. No handcuffs. How does that sound to you?"

I did not answer.

"Okay, release the gate lock. Open the door. Abbott, can you walk?"

I stood, holding the blanket ready by my side. Unsteadily, I slowly short-stepped past the bars, and hesitated at the door. Looking around, I watched the counselor and the guards step backward as if to encourage me to continue.

"Why don't you let go of the blanket? I will personally get you a nice, new one... Oh, I see you want this one? Okay. That's just fine with me. when we are finished talking, I'll let you come back and get it. Here, go ahead and set it down. There you go... That's really good. You got it now. why don't we just go ahead and walk out to the office, no problems?"

Much like fingernails scraped across a chalkboard, his condescending manner seriously irritated me. "Why don't you just get me a stinkin' baby bottle filled with warm milk while you're at it, and call it a day?" I mumbled.

I heard him take a deep breath. Thankfully, he decided

DWIGHT ABBOTT (CONT.)

to keep his mouth shut, for the moment. I heard a few brave snickers emitted from the other cells.

I've little doubt it was obvious to all I was having a considerable amount of trouble with my vision. As we walked down the tier, the outside light had an extremely painful effect on my eyes. Someone reached and lightly held my arm, guiding me into the same room where I had been sutured. Seated, there were two men and a woman, all dressed expensively.

"Please have a seat, Abbott. I've been told you don't talk much, so I will just go ahead and lay things out as we know, or think them to be. If you have any questions, any at all, stop me and ask."

As he spoke, I could not look up at him. I was forced to cover my eyes. Already, I had what felt to be a migraine headache, something else I had suffered throughout my childhood.

"Who has some tinted glasses? Anyone have a pair? Would you hand them to Abbott? Put those on, Dwight. Should help you out some." I put them on.

"We have been contacted by California officials who have informed us their recently completed investigation has uncovered the probability they were misinformed regarding your relationship with members of a certain prison gang. It has been requested we prepare you for transfer back to California the day after tomorrow."

"What day is it?" I whispered.

A startled response: "Tuesday."

"Month?"

"October 3."

"Tomorrow is my 35th birthday," was the only response I had for them.

MICHAEL CABRAL The following piece came to us as a personal letter from Michael Cabral, the remarkably gifted young (20-year-old) who has been gracing our pages with his profound observations. His mind-blowing abilities to express them with both power and sensitivity would be noteworthy at any age. We asked him if we could share this personal letter with our readers because we found it so moving - and so disturbing. His description of the "Red, White and Blue," and what it has meant for him and those that grew up with him should be required reading for every so-called political leader in the state and the country. While America offers bountiful gifts for many, what it "provides" to the least among us (economically, educationally, socially) is nothing short of disgraceful. The young people that we have swept into a system of criminal responses that cannot even pretend to be just is America's harvest of shame. While we hate the idea of this beautiful young writer spending long years inside California's prisons (currently Polican Bay), we are blessed to have his insights, and proud to call him friend.

My America

There were many, many days when only the dream of one day being able to get away from all the nightmarish realities that is my American home is all I had to draw any semblance of hope from. I remember walking through my neighborhood one day. I was 16 years old, and I was on my way to meet up with the "homies" and get drunk like we did on every day we could afford it (and even on some days when we couldn't.)

I walked past the park where I saw Shawna, Jessica and a few other girls exiting the public restroom laughing, stumbling, waving when they saw me. Shawna and one of the other girls lifted their shirts and flashed their breasts to me - more laughing. "don't worry about nothin'," I remember telling them, smiling more than just some. "I'll be back in a little bit."

Across the street in the soccer field, somebody was getting beat up pretty badly by three or four others. The words, "Fool," "Punk," and "Now what?" could be heard very clearly. But they didn't yell out any neighborhood, and I didn't recognize them. So I figured it was none of my business, and I kept on pushing. Then I walked past "The Yellow House" - a crack house in the alley painted yellow like crack, ha, ha.

Hanging out by the front door where you could always find him was Alex, a little boy no older than 8 or 9. He was dirty, wearing nothing more than a pair of underwear, and smoking a cigarette. "Go put some clothes on, Alex. It's cold out here."

"Eff you!" I miss that kid.

Not 20 feet away, Chuck was sitting on a metal folding chair and, true to his at least 35-year-old self, was hitting on a crack pipe. "Come on, Chuck, what the hell are you doin'? at least take that shhh out back, Man."

"Ha, ha, ha," Chuck started laughing. You know, like I told a joke. Then he pet that big ugly dog I've never seen him without, and said, "What's up, Tuffy? Oh, and hey, check out what I got." He turned his back to me, not even waiting for a response, and pulled the collar of his shirt down, exposing his new tattoo - a proudly waving red, white and blue American flag on the back of his neck.

I remember it occurring to me at that moment (vaguely, though, and I still can't quite explain it today) that proudly depicted on the flesh of an all-American crack head is exactly where that flag belongs. Because for all my 16 years, this: Dirty little kids with no clothes; teenage girls who never learned to or how to respect themselves and were never taught just how important as women they are to our communities and world; scared young boys fighting, shooting, killing each other, just "having" to prove to the world that they're "real men," but only because they just "can't" deal with or even bring themselves to acknowledge the lost, hurt, yet beautiful people they really are; just enough welfare money for our parents to get a couple grams of dope; neighbors that are just like chuck; 12-13-year-old immigrants working our fields in the day time because schools don't pay. Besides, schools aren't safe. They mean trouble, and trouble means jail. Jail means deportation, and deportation means yet another family left alone in this country with even less than the nothing they already have; etc., etc., etc.

This is all the red, white and blue has ever been willing to offer me, Alex, Shawna and thousands upon thousands more just like us. This is our home. This is our "freedom." This is our "one nation under God." I wish I could explain it... but anyway, I never made it to the spot where the homies were drinking; I never made it back to Shawna - not that night. I just turned around and walked away with nowhere to go. And, after a couple of blocks, I lifted the hood of my sweatshirt over my head - so nobody would see my crying. I felt like shhh, worthless, and I didn't even know exactly why.

JEREMY TOWNER Though there are some things we wish would never end, we know everything must come to an end - even some of our most favorite creations. We've really enjoyed this next writer's autobiography, so as we're elated to see another chapter, we're also sad that the story had to end as far as the book goes. As far as the person is concerned, Jeremy Towner is far from being at his end. He continues to teach us through his words and the roller coaster ride of his experiences. We've truly been captivated by this story and have literally been awaiting every chapter. For though there were some very disturbing images in his book (which is titled 'Con-flicted'), you could tell it was real and that this man has to be a survivor after all the things he's been through. We really appreciate him sharing such a large part of himself with us. He writes from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, and we can't wait for his next book. Thank you for everything Jeremy...

Con-flicted, Chapter 7 "The End To The Beginning"

I thought a lot about that night but it does me no good. It was done and I was running. Desperate to get away I was in a panic. Full of fear I was disillusioned as to what to do next.

Like an animal who becomes the prey I was looking for a place of solitude in which to hide from the world. But the predator was fast. Eventually I got tired and careless and was arrested in Georgia on the East Coast. They knew who I was but I denied myself of any identity with my past life. They didn't buy it at all.

I was then brought back to Santa Cruz and placed into the juvenile hall right down the street from Boulder Creek. Cut off from the drugs and liquor I went crazy a couple of times, lashing out on other people's weakness and they lashing out on mine. I didn't think it was going to end like this. So spontaneous and fast. It was like getting punched in the face and you wake up and see you're fighting for something that isn't real.

I was talked into taking a deal for 19 to life for no contest, which was boosted to 21 to life for use of a weapon. I wasn't even sent to CYA for evaluation for placement, which was my right. They just sent me straight to prison. Sixteen and lost forever with no one to blame but myself.

I came into prison in ignorance and was told I would be fine. I have done things in here only to seal the deal on my fate. I tried to find a belief, a faith, a God who would accept my struggle and forgive me. But I couldn't find that God because I couldn't forgive myself. I was baffled by how easy it was to bring this power of destruction from within to destroy the things around me. But it comes with a price to bring out this chaotic force one must destroy himself. Kind of like a suicide bomber.

I eventually killed a man with my own hands because I was left to believe that it was right and the only way to live in prison. Deceived beyond reason I took what was not mine to take but God's alone. Realization became a daily revelation as to who I really was.

After I killed that man my own so-called brothers, friends,

comrades of the "white race" turned on me. The lesson was becoming clear. No man is safe when surrounded by thieves and cut throats. How stupid could I have been trying to earn a convict's respect. That's how low and desperate I became.

Finally I quit the game. I realized it for what it was and quit. Any man can be tough but it's the situation that shows who the man really is. I have called my own friends into the cells to fight with knives.

Tough men who can fight but when it came down to it were cowards. I was living with fools who have a diluted dream to become superior then the next just to seem important and political. They take others down with them because they have blinded their followers with delusions of grandeur.

Upon my transfer to the hole in another prison I prayed. I knew I didn't want to live a life of ignorance and I prayed. It was answered with a sign. "Christ is your answer."

God has seen me and is now showing me a path that I could never see before. My change of heart was when my prayers were answered. When I arrived to Corcoran State Prison I was shown another sign "Christ is your answer."

I didn't need to be told again so I studied the Bible. I could now understand everything the Bible was saying about Christ's sacrifice for my sinning. About forgiveness, diligence, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity and more. I found myself, a little late, but I did it. I have come to realize that our fates, no matter what, are in our hands. We do choose the way we want to live. To live a life of crime and expect not to get caught is foolishness. Everyone gets caught so what's the use of doing crime. Try to at least run out all your options out before you break the law.

Because you never do know when your life will be blown away into nothing but it will happen. It's like holding your breath for something good. You hold it too long you will die but if you stop waiting for something to happen to you and go out and earn it then you can breathe the sweet breath of life.

This is my path, my boots, my story and my warning. Only a fool would refuse wisdom and I hope anyone who has read this has come to see where they might go if they continue.

Do what's right and you become a king with honor and respect. Don't chase shadows you can't catch. My shadow was my fathers guidance, respect, and attention but I now know it will never happen no matter how many letters I write. I have turned from my ignorance to see the light of my ways and I hope to continue in the ways of God.

Thank you for reading and I hope you find your path. Good luck and God speed.

This Pen Is Alive

Turning thought to substance
As it strikes out with whip like strokes
Transferring memory from one mind to another
Almost mechanical like deity
It's black magic staining the page with twisted thoughts.
Memories, dreams, tragedies.
Pools of words streaming from a source in rapid succession.
Striving to fulfill the need to create meaning to it all.
A sword for truth and peace yet able to destroy all the same.
A world leader it marks decisions to impact the world.
A lonely soul it writes the last will of mankind upon this earth.
Yet so useless to those ignorant of it's mighty power.
Use it wisely to your advantage
And create your world of words with your pen.

No man is safe when surrounded by
thieves and cut throats. How stupid
could I have been trying to earn a
convict's respect. That's how low
and desperate I became.

THEE MOUSEMAN

We've been missing this name in our pages lately, so we had to get him in this week. From a perspective all his own as a self-proclaimed O.G., he gives everyone something to think about. As he passionately keeps it real with all of us about how he views things being an experienced survivor, we realize that we really need these words of wisdom in our lives. We realize that all too often great conversations are hard to come by out here. But when reading pieces like these, we are immediately and appreciatively taken away from that and amazed by the great conversations you great writers share with us. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, and we can't wait until he drops some more lines on us. We're grateful for your lessons and we're more than ready to learn more.

You Are Her And She Is You, Part Two

All right, Kiddo... Back at cha in a manner you understand all too well. No 50.00 dollar words from me, I say it as I know it best simple. If you can rise above what I say and how I say it, I am happy for you. Having said that much peep this....

Look out! Thee Mouseman is going to talk about GOD, again, not THAT GOD, my GOD. Why? Cause you said you were missing part of the puzzle. I assume you were speaking cause you were looking for some feedback? If not, excuse my intrusion. Anyhow here is how I see it from my side of the moon.

What your missing is GOD, Good Orderly Direction, I say that because not too many people can or will take the time to knock someone who is traveling in a Good Orderly Direction, in fact the opposite is what normally happens.

If you take a Direction in life where you are intent on bettering yourself, there are those who will assist you in every manner you can think of and then some. On the other hand!!! Should you decide to play "The Game", you will find just as many people willing and wanting to take a satisfaction in locking you up for quite a long time.

Your sitting in your little cell hell, come on kiddo! Figure it out! You are aware there is a PROBLEM, goooooood! That is the first step to a new way and a new day. You are aware that your life style, your situation, your actions will in the end or upon someone else's inspection bring you nothing better than a different cell.

You have to "shake" everything and everyone that you feel has the slightest possibility of bringing you back to the place you are at in life. I do not mean a cell, nah, I mean on unstable ground. Wondering what your future is going to be, don't wonder. Make it happen.

I don't blow smoke, I see plenty of writings by kids such as yourself, you just happen to catch my attention

You have the ability to rise above; I can see that in your writing, just like Lil' Spooks, Maya, Smokey, Lil' Foot, Cuervo, Jesebel, Anonymous B2, Bubbamilk, April GU, Cito B4, John Doe Juggalo, and my favorite of the week>>> Don't Trip and those are just the ones I remember off the top of my head, Fantastic! You all got some place good to start, a Idea, a "NOTION" which is knowing without really knowing why! That things are, and can be much different and much worse. In short YOU REALIZE!

You realize what you got right at this moment "WILL NOT WORK", it will fail, when judged by those who have judged you once before. Understanding that is the first move towards responsibility, some won't and don't get that! I mean they never GET IT! Or they GET IT too late, like me!! Personal responsibility, all that means is you have become aware of what you do and where your actions are likely to get you, its all simple math> if I pick up a gun + when I use it = someone is going to get shot at, and I will be held responsible for that!

Once you realize simple math and what it gets you, then you do simple accounting. Am I, (fill in your name) willing to spend (fill in the amount of days, months, years) in a tiny box. You just signed a deal granting the state to take action against you for any direction you choose to take other than a Good Orderly Direction. And the State can change the terms of the contract at anytime.

Now I really do not see that as a good deal, what I see as more to my and maybe your liking is moving in a direction that few will find questionable, oh someone is always gona question it. When you move away from the things that hold you down, you will be questioned, believe that! Be prepared to do something you may have not done in quite some time>>>>> Stand on your own two feet. No one to tell you this is how it is, just your inner will telling you, "This is how it must be, because She is Me, and I do deserve better than I have been giving myself.

I really do not see this as a letter I am writing to you, but as a letter you will be writing to yourself sooner or later, I just thought sooner was better than later.

I have said, a few times your generation is wiser than

I was as a kid, it is true, I see more of you kids finding out what will work in life and losing less skin than my generation did. I am all to cool with that. Well Lil' Folks, ya'll take it slow and give everything a second thought. Especially what a O.G. like me has to say, I might just be playing "The Game".... am I lying, any questions?

You Are Her And She Is You, Part One

You are her

All the answers are deep seeded within your young heart
All you need to do is find a place to start

You are her

You are one of a kind

Not at all like the rest of the girls doing their time

You are her

She is learning a lesson all too well
At times it seems like it's all a living hell

You are her

You will find a way

To make a lie of all that they choose to say

Something is wrong, you were not given a even break
A little bit of your youth, the state did take

But, you are her and you will find a way

This is just one out of 365

It is just one day

You are her and you will survive another day

No time to trip on what it is that they say

You will find your own way

This ain't no game, this is for real

Someone tell me, what is the deal?

But, you are her, she is you

State got you twisted all up in a tiny box with little white bricks

Someone's up to no good, with their dirty little tricks

But you are her and you have a clue

You know for a fact something is missing, Tabatha, what cha gona do?

You are her and she is in a cage

What cha gona do, go into some funky rage?

I see you, we hear you all too clear

What cha gona do, spend the rest of your life here?

Smart, you are, you write so bright

You telling me you can't figure out what's going to do you right

You are her and she is you

This is a piece of puzzle, just a little clue

For Tabatha

MARK KUNI Writing from Madison County Jail, somewhere in the great US of A, we bring you a man who's obviously on a mission to let his girl know how he feels. He wrote twelve short poems and we can see about ten of them that are dedicated to a girl. It pains us to see people spending too much time focused on someone else - especially in the situation of being incarcerated. We sort of feel like life is too short to be focused on anyone but ourselves when in jail. We know that no one can do that fully, otherwise they wouldn't be human, but it is nice to see people at least attempting to do so. Sometimes we wish for people to act a certain way or be loyal to us, but in the end we can't control anyone but ourselves. Sometimes it's easier to just accept a loss and move on rather than continually trying to bring the great memories of the past back in the present. We hope this girl is there for this next writer, but if not, we know he'll make himself strong enough to prevail.

Can You Remember

Can you remember when you use to write me
Can you remember when you use to visit me
Can you remember saying that you missed me
Can you remember saying that you loved me
But now all of that is just a fading memory
And my life without you is full of misery
When I try to say your name it comes out in a slur
And when I try to picture your face it's just one big blur
Without you I no longer have a plan
Without you I will grow old and be a lonely man
How can you even act like you don't know who I am
Let me just ask you something. Do you even give a damn?

Trust Is A Must

Love, trust, respect are all I need
Anything more could be considered greed
I've got to have love in order to thrive
I need your love to stay alive
Trust is a must. I must trust in you
We've got to be honest and always stay true
Respect my beliefs and always stay real
An as long as we have all these three
Then always, in life you will have me
And even through anything more could be
Considered greed
Love, trust, and respect are all we need

And even through anything more could be
Considered greed
Love, trust, and respect are all we need

Soul Mate

Christie, I always knew that me and you was fate
Even all the way back to our very first date
I knew then you were my soul mate
And what you are doing to me is not even fair
And why do you act like you don't even care
What's wrong with you, have you forgot you
Gave our baby life
And all this time you've been promising me
That you would be my wife
I'm sorry to say you fell off track
Way back when you started smoking crack

Only Time Will Tell

Now that I am locked up, you don't want me
Back when I was out, you was all on me
So when I get back out, how's it going to be
Are you going to be with him, or you going to be with me?
Then only time will tell
When I get out of jail
Back when I was out you was all on me

Echo

Do my words echo through your mind
Do my words have meaning time after time
Am I descriptive enough when I express myself
Would you consider me bad for your health
Or do I give you strength and keep you sane
Or do I help ease your pain
Am I good or bad for what am I
Would you say for you I'm the perfect guy
How do you view me within your thoughts
Would I be better off as a for-get-me-not
Describe to me how it is you feel
Tell me the truth and always stay real
And do my words have meaning time after time
And are my words continuously echoing through
Your mind time after time

Just Keep It Real

Girl your actions use to leave me amazed
But now your actions just leaves me in a daze
And I really don't know what you want me to do
But I want you to know I do love you
And all I really ask out of you
Is for you to stay true
But you can't even stick to our deal
All you had to do is stay real
I wish all of this was a big joke
Because I am the only one with their head broke
I am not trying to make this out to be a big deal
But girl this is truly how I feel

So Many Times

Girl so many times, I sit here and thank
And so many times, my brain goes blank
And every time I come through
All I can see is little ol' you
And every time I see you, I see your beautiful face
And all I do is dream for one more taste
And how can you blame me for having such good taste
That's the reason why I do what I do
And you know you will always be my boo
All because your baby boy loves you
So would I be asking too much
For my baby girl to keep in touch

I Don't Keep Time, Time Keeps Me

When things go wrong and you sitting behind bars
You're not with your family, driving places in cars
Your dinner not sitting in your usual spot
Just dinner served on steel, and the food not even hot
Someone asked what time it was today
Hell I don't know, what reason I say
I don't have a reason I guess
I answer him, time has no meaning, you friggin' pest
I'm locked up like a fool, and a fool I am
Too old for this shhh yes I do give a damn
I don't keep time, time keeps me
Out there doing wrong is when I can't see
No purpose it served, you only have one life
Why cause my family and people this strife
Please get me out of here, so I can live my life right
Buy me a watch, and I'll keep time tonight
Time only matters when there is somewhere to be
Not sitting here in jail, wondering where they will send me.

A Story To Tell

Listen up I have a story to tell
My bond is set high to make bail
And so many times I sit in my 5 by 10 cell
Just wishing for someone to send me some mail
Well it looks like I am going to be here for a spell
I may as well get comfortable in this place I call hell
But you might of heard it called jail
Remember if you go against the system you will fail?
That will conclude my story to tell

Nonchalant

When I see you don't act all nonchalant
And act as though it's not me you want
Express yourself show me how you feel
No matter the situation always stay real
Don't try to act shy or even pretend
As though I'm just some simple friend
You've had these thoughts like I have too
You know you have, you know it's true
See there's freak in you I got no doubt
And it's my job to bring it out
To show you things you've yet of done
Those sexual things those things of fun
So don't be surprise when they let me go
When I show you things you've yet to know
We've got a lot to experience and a lot to do
There's a lot ahead for me and you
So don't act as though it's not me you want
When you see me and act all nonchalant

Macking

Baby looks may be deceiving but what's underneath
Is what you should be seeing
And baby I have words that are so damn deep
You will be calling my name out in your sleep,
Baby if you're looking for confidence, or even if you're
Looking for experience, I have so many notches
Below my belt, and I got over 100 moves to make you melt
Baby last time you seen me I was buck wild
Now I have myself a beautiful child
Baby if you like what you hear, then maybe
When I get out I can buy you a beer

Something Like Whoa

Girl I really wanted you to know
That you're something like whoa
I love the way your hair shines
Just like a hand full of brand new dimes
And you have the most beautiful eyes
And let's not forget about those thighs
You're kind, loving, and have a good heart
It's almost like you was made from Hallmark
So if anyone ever tells you that you like whoa
Now you can tell them that you already know

Before I met this girl named Camille Clark
My heart was completely dark

JAMEL BRYANT The summer is fading fast but
The Flames Of Love are still
burning. Love is always in the air for some reason and sometimes it makes
us sick to our stomachs and at other times it's exactly what we need. From
way across the other side of the country in the Highland Residential Center
in Highland, NY, we get flames sent to us. We hope that he's receiving the
love he needs until he gets out and can be with the ones who genuinely
love him. Today we can appreciate a good love poem. Thanks...

TERRY LYTL We've heard many stories about
how car accidents have severely
injured people and even in some cases can cause someone to lose their
life. The beginning of this poem is just as frightening. However, then
it takes a turn for the good as he wakes up and realized he's still alive.
Experiences like this one can make us be grateful for the lives we
have, rather than taking them for granted when they can end at any
given moment. He's writing from the Marion Correctional Institution
in Marion, NC.

The Flames Of Love

The flames of love burn deep in to the soul
And when you're in love they're out of control
They burn in the morning , mid day and all thru the night
When you meet some one and it's love at first sight
If you don't feel the flames than the feeling isn't right.

Before I met this girl named Camille Clark
My heart was completely dark
As I got to know her, the flames started to grow
I was falling in love and I didn't even know
It went from a spark to a little fire
Than a roaring flame of a transparent blue
From this point on the flames just grew.

The flames will be in the end
Just as they were in the start
They're hot as hell but sooth the heart
They will toast the wicked and cure the ill
The flame has a burn of a selective kill
The flames burn forever like loves endless ways
The flames last forever and a spark goes on for days
The silt from the flames rose to the heavens above
And saved my soul with Camille's sweet love.

Alive

Falling asleep at the wheel
Then my pulse contracts
And
As I react
I notice the lights are blurry
My vision's kind of fuzzy
Because there's raindrops
On
The windshield, within
But then my heartbeat comes back
And I see that I'm alive
As the sadness settles down
And reality sets in
I feel the wetness of tears
Escaping from within
Tonight, the rain on call
Are just memories... that fall
Of my fall (our falls?)
But then my heart beat...
Comes back
And I see
That... I am... alive

KEVIN GENTRY Writing from Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA, we give you a very inspirational writer. He's been incarcerated for thirteen years and has been through a whole lot, yet his outlook on life is impeccable. This week he writes about something we're sure will make everyone curious. He writes about being one out of about fifty-three people to view a screening of 'Walk The Line,' a movie about the late great Johnny Cash and what he went through in his life. Not only that, but the lead actor, Joaquin Phoenix, came to visit them and watch it as well. How inspiring is that? Here you have someone who's out there with millions, taking the time out to go and visit a place no one else wants to even think about. We're sure it meant a lot to those of you over there at Folsom, especially given the historic Folsom Prison concert Johnny Cash played many years ago. We appreciate Kevin's ideas and insight about such a wonderful experience in a place that normally isn't wonderful. Thank you for a great piece. And thank you to the actors who haven't forgotten what's important despite all the money and fame. Great writing and acting... Oh by the way, Kevin, once upon a time, was one of our earliest BWO writers! It's great to hear from this OG Beat writer!

Living Life

For the last four years I thought that I'd been incarcerated in Folsom State Prison. For about three hours here recently, it was anything but. I got to do something that I never thought I'd be able to behind prison walls: I, along with "53" other inmates saw the movie "Walk The Line." That in itself wasn't the amazing part though. The fact that the movie wasn't even on DVD yet, and the fact that 20th Century Fox (who produced the movie) arranged a special showing in the prison chapel is. Not only that but, one of the stars of the film, Joaquin Phoenix, accompanied by "Shooter" Jennings who also appears in the film portraying his father Waylon, stopped by as well. Many people would say "so what" that it isn't that big of a deal. Well to me after being in prison all of these years (thirteen) it is a big deal! Going to the movies was something that I took for granted when I was younger; a place I would go to spend time with friends, a girlfriend or even a place just to pass the time when I'd cut school. Yes! When your prison chapel is turned into a make shift movie theater, including an appearance by some of the actors, it is a big deal, for me anyhow.

It's been awhile since I've been around speakers that shook a room, sound so loud that it'd make you flinch and cover your ears. Yeah I just leaned back in my chair and soaked up the experience from the very first minute. I forgot that I was in prison - almost (it's hard to forget that you're in prison). In place of the usual chapel stage and podium area was a huge movie screen flanked by studio speakers. From before we even stepped into the chapel, there was certainly a different feeling in the air. Television cameras were set up inside and out. In the chapel, there were reporters, photographers and people from the press everywhere. I didn't know whether to feel like we were the ones in the glass fish bowl or they were - we were all, sort of looking at each other in amazement. If you could hear their thoughts I'm sure they'd be saying "I wonder what he's in here for" or, "am I safe in this room with all of them?" That's all par for the course though. After all, this is a prison. And people who aren't ever around prisoners tend to have that reaction at first. When all was said and done however, I think that everyone was fairly comfortable with each other.

The movie was pretty good, as well. Though it's about Johnny Cash's life - someone I know very little about - it had a message that I think almost anyone can relate to: you can have nothing (or so you think) but with a dream, hard work and determination, you can achieve greatness. The other message being: you can think you have it all, but when you're not sure what all is, you really don't have anything.

My definition of all: freedom. Freedom to live where you want, do what you please (within reason), wake up when you want, eat what you want, visit with your friends and loved ones when you want; basically having a life and doing things you enjoy, when you want to enjoy them. This is just part of the definition, but I think that you get the point. You may have your own definition - things that are near and dear to your heart - but when it comes down to it, I think that we appreciate and love all the same basic things. All these things, however, go out the window when we don't play by the rules of society, and are thrown in jail as a result.

Just considering the movie's story, it was another example of no matter how famous you are, rich, or how

beautiful, or how athletic, or whatever, you can still have all the problems in the world. The money, fame, etc. doesn't mean anything! In the movie, Johnny Cash initially sets out like so many other people who later become famous with a dream to do something great. He wanted to be a singer. Eventually, with some persistence and dedication, he did just that. He started out small time; then, eventually hit it big! The bigger he got however, the smaller the world got to him. The pressure of increased stardom took their toll. To deal with these pressures, he became addicted to pills: pain killers and amphetamines. Like many such cases however, the pain wasn't physical; it was purely psychological and emotional. It was a heartache type of pain, one that pills have no effect over. The pain had its roots long before he became a singer, only fully surfaced later. The demands of his new life overwhelmed him: a new wife and family, a new career and all the responsibilities that came with that, and wounds from childhood that were still very fresh and active.

As a kid, he dealt with the disease of feeling like he was never good enough; a disease wholly inflicted by his father. All through childhood, and well into adulthood, he had to deal with severe emotional abuse from his father; treating him like he was nothing and all the emotional abuse that comes with it. In fact, probably one of the most distressing times in his life was when his father blamed him for the death of the oldest son, Johnny's big brother. Why did God take the good one, his father would later tell him. From an early age, Johnny had to bear the cross of being the mistake, the unwanted child. No doubt, he harbored all this pain throughout his life and was trying to mask the wounds with the pills, the alcohol, the music, or whatever else he could find to escape from reality. It didn't matter that he now had success: a wife and two kids, his dream career, and all the financial security that comes along with it. He felt empty.

I think that we all try to numb ourselves of painful memories at different points in our lives. I know that I did for much of my life. No matter how many blessing I (now see) had, it was just never enough to fill the emptiness that I felt. Funny thing is...as I look back now, that emptiness was merely illusionary. I had everything I needed in life, and many times more. It's all in how you perceive things. The way I see it is: if you have food to eat, a place to sleep, good health, and people who love you, as well as ones that you love, you are filthy rich. Many people in the world don't even have the food part covered, let alone the other things. Believe it or not many of us in society are very fortunate; it's all how we view things. I know, I know... this is something you've heard adults tell you for along time. Believe me, I've heard the speech as well. I used to just brush it aside, also. But after thirteen years of incarceration, I not only believe it, I live it! Adults say all that stuff about how "it's the little things in life" that are important. Well, it's true. Anyone who's been incarcerated knows it's true.

Think about it... who's the first person you call when you're in trouble? Who are you going to call on for help? Who are you going to call when you need money for canteen or a package? More times than not, the answer is going to be family, mom specifically. That's because we know that they'll love us regardless of what we've done. The unconditional love that families give is priceless. They're part of those little things that mean so much. We, sometimes, only begin to understand that after they're gone. The "big picture" tends to get a lot clearer with time.

Though I live in an 8 by 8 box with two locks on the door and have no idea when I'm going home, I consider myself very fortunate in many ways. I have all those things I spoke of: food, shelter, loved ones and my health - all of which I'm very grateful. I didn't always feel this way, though - not in the least! For much of my life, I had blinders on. I only saw what I wanted to see, what I thought I was looking for in life: money to impress people, all the newest stuff, the latest and greatest clothes, a car; not an old bucket of a car, but a shiny new ride. At the time, I thought those things were my life blood and that I absolutely couldn't live without them growing up. I remember my parents telling me stuff like, those things aren't that important. I can recall thinking... if you only knew, mom. Looking back... all those material things were just a crutch. I wasn't secure enough with myself to stand on my own two feet in front of my friends

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and be myself. I think that's something we all struggle with to a degree, and deal with in different ways.

In Johnny Cash's case, he was more self-destructive than anything. He drowned himself in the booze and choked on the pills. In my case, I was both self-destructive and destructive to other people as well. I hurt those that meant the most to me, as well as others, and somehow it was justifiable in my own immature mind. Throughout my teen years, I stole thousands from my parents to support my crazy lifestyle. They hurt deeply as a result of my actions - the pain was obvious - but I just couldn't find the strength or desire to stop. The rewards outweighed the negatives, or so I thought. I put my parents, and others who were close to me, through hell, all to advance my perceived social status. I was blind-walking aimlessly in circles. I did so much destructive stuff in my life. All for what?

Back then, it would seem like I was stealing to buy the things that I thought would fill the empty voids in my life. The trick turned out be that the voids had a bottomless floor. I couldn't fill those needs fast enough. It was insatiable. What I later found out was that I had to first build a solid foundation, address the issues (my insecurities, first and foremost) that existed within me, which caused those voids. Fortunately, I eventually learned how to do just that. Unfortunately though, a life was lost, and many other lives were disturbed in the process of me learning my life-lessons.

The point is: for many years, I'd struggled to chase after an "identity" that was illusionary, it was a chase that had a heavy price. I never found security in all those material possessions I was trying to obtain. All I found were hiding spots. The thing about that is, you always have to come out into the open at some time. When that tie comes, there you are again, naked, exposed, and looking for that next hiding spot (oops, I mean a brand new 'fit to impress my "friends") Webster's definition of friend: a person attached to another by affection or regard.

In other words: a friend is someone who doesn't judge you by outward appearances. They like you for who you are. Some might say that this is all easy for me to say at 30 years old, far removed from the fierce, cruel world that is adolescence. To those people I say: yes, I am 30, but I do remember well, what it was like to be a kid. I came to jail as a youngster and, as a result-for good and bad-the memories of that period are very fresh. Being incarcerated is funny in that sense. No matter how much you mature in prison, part of you stays in the memory of who you were before you came to jail. That's not to say, in the least, that you just picked up where you left off when you get out. Not at all! I just mean that most memories are still very fresh from when I was out there. I remember how I felt to wake up in the morning and get ready for school; how it was to sit down for a meal with the family; how it felt to have the freedom to do things like walk out the house and go play ball at the park, go to school dances, etc. I also remember the fear (and rush) of getting into trouble for various things. Memories, both regrettable and memorable, are etched into my mind. That's the way it should be, though. All our memories and experience make up the person we are today. Without them, we lose our basis for who we are to become in the future. We learn from both our mistakes and triumphs. Learn from mine. Our past is a treasure trove of tools and experiences for which we can make anything we want. With that power is the ability to make, both, works of greatness, or of destruction.

Johnny Cash, as depicted in the movie, appeared as greatness to those who didn't know him, fans, who only saw the entertainer. But, oftentimes, as a demon to those who knew him well. The pain was evident in his music. He had his issues, as all of us do. Like many of us, as well, change was scary. He had grown accustomed to living in his flawed skin no matter how wrong he considered his actions to be. After long, however, his love for his soon-to-be wife, June, drove him to begin changing his life. When people decide to make changes in their life, big or small, the impetus is individualistic. Everyone has their own reasons. I had many; some of the biggest being my love for my family and my overall newfound respect for life, and people, in general. They all have the right to live as they

see fit, without interference from idiots like the person I used to be. It's amazing, as I look back, to see how cruel I was at times. I was so self-centered to think that I could just arbitrarily choose to victimize people for whatever reason, and soon afterwards just continue on with my life as if nothing happened, when the people's lives I had just so callously disturbed are left to deal with the wake of my destruction. It just goes to show how strong the human will and spirit is. If you really set your mind to do something, you'll find a way.

In my case, I plotted, pre-meditated, and calculated, whatever - all to achieve something unjust. Think what can be accomplished if you put that aim and determination towards a positive outcome. Businessmen, professionals and entrepreneurs do it on a daily basis, and they reap the rewards, all the things that we covet so much: the cars, money, jewelry, etc. the only thing is that they enjoy those things much longer. On the other hand, people like me who are on a warpath to achieve those things often end up growing up in prison. Often times, you're given a sentence with no guarantee of going home. How much do those things really mean to you? I really thought that they'd transform my life, that I'd somehow be complete with them. As I sit in my cell right now, thirteen years later, those material items are no longer around, nor are they wanted. What I want, more than any of that stuff, is just to enjoy a home cooked meal with the company of my loved ones. The simple thing in life - the most important things, to me.

Just about anything is within reach when you put your mind to it. Not only is it possible, but it's also genuinely satisfying to do something good, rather than succumb to the temporary, false highs of doing something bad. I have plenty of evidence to back-up my theory; it's in the form of 34 CA prisons, which hold over 160,000 people. Doing the right thing is always a win-win situation you don't have to hide. You don't have to watch your back. You don't have to hide your face from the police, our parents, from whoever. On the contrary, you can hold your head up high to everyone around you. You can look people straight in the eye and know you've got nothing to hide. More than that, you're honoring yourself and your loved ones when you make something out of your life. Your achievements - what results from your actions - are the dividends you reap when you do the right thing. When you do the wrong thing... well, I'm living the rewards of those actions right now.

Johnny Cash, like many others are forced to face the demons of their lives, realize afterwards that the best times are ahead of them. You can always change. I didn't say that it was easy, but it's possible for sure. Hey, the uphill battle can oftentimes be fun!

All of us have our different motivation for why we change our ways. For Cash, his love for his wife brought him to a point where he had to make a decision; to lose the pills and booze, or lose the one person he loved. For me, from the first few moments in a jail cell, I knew that I had to change. Of course, change is gradual, but impetus to change can be instantaneous. That impetus - or spark - has to come from within. You have to want it more than anything. You have to feel it in your bones! You may not like the resulting change at first. It's going to be very difficult to change the ways you've grown accustomed to, but it's necessary at some point. The struggle is hard, but the reward is great.

It's not my place to judge, or tell you how you should live based on what I've gone through. Those are not my intentions. I merely want to share my experiences with anyone who might receive them. Everyone has a right to live their own lives as they see fit. But, if you're living your life in a manner similar to how I once did, you're no longer living your own life. When living your life causes physical or emotional harm to others, be it directly or indirectly, you're trying to dictate other people's lives. You're in the wrong! You see, there is very little we do that doesn't affect someone else in some way. Whether you see it or not, we always have a responsibility to be considerate in what we do. We don't have the right to bring harm to others.

CHANTÉLL PRICE - PRIEST There's a lot to think about in this collection from the Priest. In "What The Future Offers," this veteran Beat Without contributor reminds our younger Beat writers not to accept anyone's definitions of what they should become (or what they "can't" become), and that, with effort, they can be whatever they choose to be. He reminds us all not to let others define us or limit our choices. The collection of poems is harder to describe. But everything that this thoughtful writer submits provokes our own thinking, which is the mark of a good writer. Chantéll Price (Priest) writes his prose and poetry from Corcoran State Prison.

Dear Beat Readers

What's up Beat readers? I'm back again, an' tryin' to bring somethin' fresh to the table! Man, there's all kinds of stuff I be wantin' to put y'all up on... But straight up - I thoroughly suck at explaining shhh! I can never get my desires (a bit of a zealot at times) and thoughts to work hand-in-hand, when I'm tryin' to explain somp'in. But don't get me wrong - I recognize the flow, and don't let it stop me from trying! So peep my newest attempt to bring you all some pure script!

What The Future Offers

Youth of tomorrow, the future can kiss you all with soft, sweet lips or bite you all in the ass with sharp poisonous fangs! The future offers so much to you all! There is no need to be weak, nor be swallowed by life! Take hold of your individuality! Come to terms with your hearts and minds! You all can overcome your environments/present situations! You can best those who wish to hold you back, can embrace your inner potentials! The future offers so much to you all!

Do not believe that crap about your only options being: inmate or rapper, welfare mother or singer, pimp or athlete, 'hood rat or model, slanger or actor, stripper or actress... don't believe it. Those are not your only options and don't buy that crap! Your options are those you all hold the potential for - and you all can awaken that potential!

The future is ready to kiss you all if you do! And just to be honest, there will be those of you who will hold the potential to be: Actors! Actresses, rappers/singers, Models/athletes! But the percentage of those who will have this potential: two out of every ten!

But that will be their potential - what of yours? There could be a doctor, lawyer, accountant, machinist, cop, scientist in you! Find your potential! Don't let anyone, nor your environment make you chase something that's not you! There is nothing dishonorable of unfly about being an accountant, a cop, or a computer technician. If any of those occupations are what you all want to do to live a good life (there are jobs out there that will pay you all good money, with little stress involved!) and rise above your situations, then seize them! Don't let people manipulate your futures!

The future can kiss you all deeply and passionately! Then again this future can bite the holy shhh out of you all! Do you all know that the murder rate is up whole country-wise! Know why? Cats are strapped and hungry for "easy" money! The thing now is - you bad? Wanna get in the game? Pop, pop! You in now! Pop or be popped! But dying on the grind is noble in a sick, twisted sense but ain't nothing "noble" 'bout getting stuck in the "new age" pen! The cops are breaking shhhh down in here, and tryin' to turn cats into straight punks! They don't respect nor fear cons anymore! They've successfully divided the cons and are runnin' this bloody beast into the ground! If any of you are headed in this direction... man, I mean you will be sorry in so many ways that you might kill ya'self...

But these options are more the poison of the future's bite than the actual pain of the bite!

The actual pain... times are changing, you guys! America is leaking out its power and dependability! Its economy is cracking. Resources will become short and available to the privileged! You all think it's hard in the 'hood now?

The Heaviness

The heaviness - the empty caress!
Cold and pasty hands manipulating emotions
through a mirror of black glass
Hands... pulling me inside out and licking upon
my essence with a dry, leathery tongue!
A tongue studded with the dreams of countless
victims...

The heaviness - besting me from every direction
until I run, sobbing and mad, into the very center of
it -
a center floating on a river fashioned from the tears of
lesser challenges...

The heaviness - a entity that fears no mortal.... and
makes deals with gods!
A force unto itself -
ruthless and swift!
Powered by phantoms slithering through the
subconscious...

The heaviness!
The dark kiss!
So deadly - yet the shape of its lips untold...

Try these one for size: less of and poor food and water quality, continuous power shortages, sparse gasoline and nationwide (mainly the 'hoods) community neglect! And at the rate of world affairs development and the U.S. role in them, the above list is a 60% eventuality and is only a list of the general and direct effects!

And I will stack my life on it - if the U.S. economy is dissolved by currently rising nations, a unspoken caste system will materialize: the powerful, semi-powerful, influential, privileged/ suburbanites/ blue collars, versus the "misfortunate/strugglers/unworthy" - basically those in low income/welfare/ no income, communities!

Some of you may not understand (ask your floor staff, the ones that seem the smartest) what I speak of. Others of you understand, but think nothing of it because you feel you're bad and can handle it! Or that what may happen several years from now doesn't affect you!

Well let me ask you two questions: Do any of you have kids or want kids in the future? Well, think of a country where your kids might be denied proper food/water, housing/ warmth because you don't have (if any job) a certain type of job and make a certain amount of money! And if you already have kids, think the same stuff for your grandkids.

Also, what would your environment/neighborhood be like if there was no law enforcement of any kind around to keep some kind of order? And understand me clearly: I'm not talking about a conspiracy theory where the government is out to get you and your family! I'm talkin' about the potential fall of an empire! And if you think all this is crap, pick up a general history book and peep out the falls of many a great empire!

But I'm not tellin' you all this stuff in an attempt to spook you! I'm tellin' you this because this future can kiss you like a lover... or set upon you all like a starved T-Rex! And whatever the future does to you, know that you will be 50% responsible for your own victimization - or 75% responsible for your victory over tough odds! But it will be wholly up to you because, as many wise and strong people have shared, one can only be oppressed/victimized/ felled by odds if one allows him or herself to be oppressed/ victimized, or felled by "tough" odds!

Well, I've tried to the best of my abilities to touch you all with what I know you all can seize and accomplish! If it didn't come across clearly enough, ask questions, do some research! Your lives rest on your desire to rise and best the odds! But on another note... hope I wasn't a straight bummer! And if so I've enclosed some more entertaining material to ease the mood some!

I'm in the wind

Inclusions

Like toxic film upon pure water... your presence taints my perception... changing the nature of its purpose... making me a future victim of self-manipulation

Time Flies By

Time flies by... and no one knows till it's time to say good-bye
Who can understand why it's so hard?
Harder than it should be!

Why do we get dealt the cards we do?
Some get Aces!
Some get Jacks!
Others get the duces way in the back...

The facts of life are so strange!
So much stress for the same...
Constantly changing
But who can change fast enough?

Stuck in the past
Who can we ask to watch time go by?

No one can slow time!
No one can speed time up!
No one can control time...

How much time is enough?
How much time is too much?
Will time continue to be rough?

Could cry - but why waste time?

Time flies by... and no one knows until it's gone!
Time flies by... and no one knows until they're alone...

Lost In The Sand

A stone lost in the sand - the water came raging...
Raging at the stone!
Raging against the stone!
Trying to knock the stone free
Trying to pull the stone out to sea

Raging and roaring!
Raging and roaring!
Steady trying to pull the stone out to sea...

The water crashes against the sand... pulling away at stones
When you're gripped by the current... you never know you gone.

Pulled out to sea - set upon a quest where you never return...

A quest controlled by the sea!
Carried to unknown locations

But there the stones.... being dragged out from the sand

Pulled from where they were
Pulled from where they were embedded
Pulled from where they belong!
Pulled from where they should be!

The water crashes against the sand... pulling away at stones

Stop that!
Stop that!
Stop pulling at stones!
Stop that!
Put them back!
Put them...
back!

CHANTÉLL PRICE - PRIEST (CONT.)

What Grips

Inspired by cross or moon -
wrestling doom to a draw!
Falling short of victory
Climbing the mountain of
chance with sore knees and
bloody hands

Standing to strive - striving to
thrive!

Surviving intact - mind, body,
soul... molded by an eternal
struggle....

Gulping victory - drunk on
revenge!

Bent - shattered is all their
tomorrows...

Their fight today
Affects next Sunday... causing
Monday to flare and fade...

A way of life for believers - the
passionate!

Yet, deceivers unto
themselves?

Chasing a wicked path -
untreadable by the weak!
Stealthling through as
shadows...

Rounding up human cattle
astray!

Day for day
Night for night

Loyalty?
Faith?
Desire?
Or fear?

Of which drives the fanatic's
life...?

Epic Love

Chorus 2x:

I've walked a mile. I've walked two... while looking for you.
In my search for you
I drank the sun. I ate the moon... while looking for you.
In my search for you

Verse 1:

I've swam a ocean. I climbed a mountain. I found a fountain...
While looking for you
I strolled a beach. I've roamed streets. I met defeat...
While looking for you
In my search for you
In my search for you
In my search for you
In my search for you

Chorus

Verse 2:

I slayed a dragon. I've rode a hawk. I made a thought...
While looking for you
I've took a bullet. I died again. I met a friend...
While looking for you
In my search for you
In my search for you
In my search for you
In my search for you

Chorus

Verse 3:

I've searched heaven. I trashed hell. I told a tale...
While looking for you
I fought the gods. I rumbled with Satan. I've been waiting...
While looking for you
In my search for you
In my search for you
In my search for you
In my search for you

Breakdown:

I've searched far. I've searched wide.
I stole a life. I bought a heart.
I've searched high. I've searched low.
I stole a soul. I bought a lie.
So much I've been through.
So much I've been through.
In my search for you
In my search for you
I don't know what to do.
I don't know what to do.
All I want is you.
All I want is you.

DANIEL ROWE Talk about getting creative with it, we've got something we haven't seen in a while in these pages. Daniel hits us with a short play this issue that's brilliant. Very simple, yet very common when you're out there on the block doing your thang. And just like reality for some, this play ends tragically. But we won't give it away, you'll have to read more to find out what happens. He then concludes with a song to Rosa who obviously has crossed over to the other side. You can see how much love Daniel has for her in his piece and we know it has probably been hard for him to deal with. Hell, a loss of a loved one to any one of us would be an obstacle. He's pulling through strong with the power of the pen and we greatly appreciate it. Thank you for such good writing once again.... He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA.



Rosa's Obituary

Verse One:

Lady you were my world idol.
Work me up to see things and glow
You will always have my heart and the love
from me
Take a peek from heaven and you
Will see

Chorus (Two Times):

Rosa, memories of you will never disappear.

Verse Two:

I was a blind man once, until
You made me realize.
That you can push whatever you
Wanna push
Don't give up on yourself make
It be
Whatever your goals is, make it
Successfully.

Chorus (Four Times):

Rosa, memories of you will never disappear.

Verse Three:

The history of you is well
Supportive
Pray that you're safe and well
Protective
Love you Rosa, truly, rest 'n' peace.
I kneel down and pray for you Rosie

Chorus (Four Times):

Rosa, memories of you will never disappear.

Live Up To Die

Scene One:

Location: Exterior, Los Angeles, California. Bad Boy stands on the corner of 43rd Street and Vermont. Bad Boy's a short, stocky, black, dark skinned young man, with black shoulder length hair. A middle age black man walks up to Bad Boy. It's twelve in the afternoon.

Middle Age Man: You got some work little bro?

Bad Boy: Yeah, for sure. What you need?

Middle Age Man: Give me fifty dollars worth.

Bad Boy serves the man fifty dollars worth of rock cocaine, receives the money from the man, and bounces down the streets on 43rd Street. Bad Boy approaches a apartment building, meeting up with a girlfriend of his, a brownish haired, short, medium built, Mexican woman, named Tiffany.

Bad Boy: Hey baby girl.

Tiffany: Hey.

Bad Boy: I just called your house. Now I see why nobody answered, you're outside.

Tiffany: So, where you been? I've been looking for you for two days.

Bad Boy: I've been here and there, trying to get my money.

Tiffany: I hope you be careful Bad Boy, I don't wanna see you hurt or dead or in jail. You know how much love I have for you. Just be safe, ok?

Bad Boy: Don't even trip, I'm on my toes.

Bad Boy gets a page on his pager.

Bad Boy: I gotta go, but I'll be back later. I got to take care of something. I'll see you later, alright?

Tiffany: Alright. Remember what I said. I love you.

Bad Boy: I love you too.

Bad Boy and Tiffany go their separate ways.

Scene Two:

Location: Interior, LA, CA, Bad Boy his partner Lele, a tall, slim, dark skinned, bald headed, black young man, makes a in house drug deal with Dee and Playa, two black high rolling dope dealers.

Bad Boy: We want to get Two Ki's. We got 30,000 to spend.

Playa: We can work with that. We'll give you two ki's for 30. Dee, hook my boys up with 2 proper ki's.

Dee: No problem.

The deal goes down, and Bad Boy and Lele bounces. The 2 jumps in a money green Cadillac Broham and takes off to their spot.

Scene Three:

Location: Exterior, LA, CA, Lele and Badboy sits on the stairs of their home on 43rd Street. The two blow weed and drink 40 oz's of Old English beers, selling drugs making money.

Lele: We need to do something with this money b' boy. We just wasting our times sitting on it doing nothing with it.

Bad Boy: yeah I feel you dog, we gone do that before it's too late. Hey! There's my girl.

Bad Boy walks across the streets, headed to Tiffany's house. A brown Nova drives through and opens fire on Bad Boy, and Bad Boy falls to the ground. Lele shoots back at the car, while Tiffany screams.

Tiffany (she cries): Oh my god.

Bad boy dies living the life on fast times and danger. He was slipping and not careful as Tiffany advised him.

ROBERT Writing from California State Prison in Susanville, CA, we give you a man on a mission to let his daughter know how he feels. He makes the bold statement that without freedom nothing matters. And though there are some that might disagree with that (like people who are doing life sentences but still find ways to give back, and in turn, free themselves), we do believe he has somewhat of a point. Freedom is the key to many things and hopefully he'll find some of those things even before being physically freed.

CHACHI Here's another new writer coming at us from N.A. Chaderjian (a CYA institution) in Stockton, CA. Like most of our Beat Without writers this one has a passion to teach the younger generation through speaking about his mistakes. It's redemption at its purest form — raw remorse. And we've said this in another intro but the best way to receive a subscription is to keep writing for us. Send us your poems, raps, essays, or whatever else you've got to teach the youth. We appreciate your letter and hopefully us publishing it will inspire you to keep writing because we're interested in what you have to say.

Nothing Else Matters

Yes! What is never seen,
Or what we have never been
Long alone away from home
The real world as in a dream
Nothing is quite what it seems
Can our future be clearly shown?
Is each of us a creature free?
Or trapped at birth by destiny?
Pity those who believe the latter
Without freedom, nothing matters
But in the real world or
Like a dream nothing is
Quite what it seems
Natalia Diano daddy loves you
And nothing else matters



TENAMAXTLI ROSAS Damn, most people can't say all that this next writer said in a whole three thousand word essay. And he did it all in this short poem. Ending it with speaking about those who suffer from the 'Peter Pan Syndrome,' where people are caught up in Never, Never Land never growing up or taking responsibility for their actions. We know all too well what kind of people he's speaking of and it's a shame to see them like that, or even hear that they're like that. He's writing from the Pelican Bay SHU in Crescent City, CA, and we think everyone should take a look at this...

Inspirational Misery

While my long journey (stay) in the SHU.
I've encountered the most miserable,
People in my life.
Which I've incorporated as a reality check,
Of having more self-respect and worth.
Than to idle (waste) the remaining years of my life,
Confined to a concrete box.
These poor lost souls are inspirational,
When they share their unwelcome adversities (misery)
In addition; whom unconsciously has become dependent,
Parasites to the American people, families and friends...
I've consciously confided with the accepted principles of
conduct,
That some people will remain mired with puerile, Peter
Pan syndrome.
While matured adults apply their previous mistakes,
As stumbling blocks towards perfection,
When they've endured every exertion,
Prosperous towards their accomplishments...

A New Subscriber

Just writing to hopefully become a new subscriber to The Beat Within. Chachi is the name and I am from the city of Modesto — 23 year old, Mexican, male incarcerated within Chaderjian's CYA institution.

Here goes a few lines about my struggle to pass go — was in the county fighting three strikes. Lucked out and ended up with two. Sentenced to CYA at the age of seventeen. My release date is 2006. Maxed out with my brothers

Still have 25 to life hanging over my head. Thanks to foolishness. I know now that I have two baby boys and a girl that's hanging on by a finger. All because I was too dumb to listen. It's time for me to grow up and face the facts and that's real because I don't plan on making this place my home 'cause I can do better than this. I have a million things to say but as of right now in my cell as I look through The Beat Within I know that I am not alone. We're all in the same places together.

To all the individuals that are getting out soon. Don't just talk about staying out and doing good. Really do it! Get into church or whatever it takes to really be successful in the real world.

Listen to me, a two-time loser with very slim get backs.

Still have 25 to life hanging over my head.
Thanks to foolishness.

STONEY Short and directly to the point, Stoney hits us with two quick poems. The first about a woman who's trying to comfort him while suffering from the distance between them. The second is about being thankful for another day regardless of how hard you might seem to have it. He's writing from the Sierra Conservation Center State Prison in Jamestown, CA.

A Broken Phone

Softly she comes across the sky
Looking into my bright blue eyes
Telling me it's gonna be alright
Soothing me with gentle words
Telling me it's not gonna hurt
Then she says "Goodbye"
Leaving me alone, by a broken phone

Just For Today

So many years, so many tears
Just don't know where to start after all, I misplaced my heart
When I was a youngster I forgot to play
Those days are gone now I pay and I pay
My wings are ready to catch some wind
My emotions twist and bend
These bars of steel
Have brought feelings I don't like to feel
So here I pray once again
For there's one more battle I plan to win
But things don't always go my way
Still I thank God just for today

BRITTANY CULLISON Making a name for herself here at *The Beat Within* with her thought provoking pieces and beautifully written poetry, we are proud to write another introduction for this next writer. This week she hits us with an incredible piece about a moment that has shaped who she is today, and although she points out that there are plenty of moments that can be deemed as life altering as far as she's concerned, one in particular sticks out to her. It was her relationship with a case worker that rescues her from a mother that didn't live up to her title. She then closes with two magnificent poems that are true to Brittany form. She's writing from the Ventura Youth Training School (one of the Youth Authority's institutions) in Camarillo, CA.

Think Of A Moment That Has Shaped Who You Are Today

For this Beat Within contest topic, I was forced to look long and hard into my past in order to find that one life altering moment/event that has truly shaped who I am today, and to be one hundred percent honest, it opened a Pandora's box of my not yet healed hurts. There is not a lot I can remember about the period of my life before foster care, but the things I do remember, I doubt I will ever forget. This is a difficult topic, because I truly feel that many moments, throughout my 17 years of life, have had a major part in molding me into the young woman I am today. I will, however, choose one, but before I tell about it, I am going to give a little background leading up to it.

It finally began to make sense, my family misery and poverty, when I was awakened on my sixth birthday by a loud thud coming from outside my siblings and my bedroom. It took me a moment to fully rouse from my sleep mode and observe my immediate surroundings. The first thing I had noticed was the smell, strong and potent like that of cat piss on a carpet, left alone for a week, unclean and neglected. It was awful, I sat up, wiped the drool off my cheek, and looked to my side where my brothers Michael, and Jimmy were sleeping soundly, unawake or disturbed by the noises that had startled me. My sister Anna-Lisa was sleeping about two feet away from me and my brothers. I remember that I was wondering what she was dreaming because her eyes were moving but her eyelids were closed - she'd looked peaceful all the same.

We were all spread out on a pile of unwashed clothing that our mother had neglected and left on the floor. I got up and tried the door, but it wouldn't open. Sometimes when mom and dad wanted to be left alone they'd tie our doorknob to the bathrooms doorknob with a pair of panty hoes to keep us in. I hated it, but could do nothing to prevent it, so I looked around the rest of the room, and my heart sank to my stomach when I finally laid eyes on the wall below our bedroom window. It was smeared with mustard and fingernail polish.

My first reaction was dread, "Oh no, Annie, what have you done?" I thought, and then almost instantly that dread became anger then rage! I went to where my little sister was sleeping and I hit her with all the strength a six year old could muster up against her five year old little sister. I hated her right then, I knew what was going to happen when the mess was discovered and I knew that it'd be ugly, and it was all her fault, I hated her. On the first blow she was awoken with a start, and screamed bloody murder. I told her to look at what she did, look at the mess. I asked her

if she liked spankings and that's why she did it. I told her I'd give her all the spankings she deserved.

By this time my two brothers, Michael and Jimmy had risen, and informed me someone was untying the doors, so I stopped and went to cower by them in the corner. "Please don't be mommy, please Jesus, not mommy," I prayed silently. The door flew open and it wasn't mom, it wasn't even daddy, but it was ok. Because after looking wild eyed in shock around the room and at my screaming sister, she looked me in the eyes, hers a mirror reflection of my fear and overwhelming confusion, said, "It's ok baby, you guys are coming with me." This lady was a stranger, old, white and well old, but she was my angel back then and actually still is today. Her name is Nancy and she is a retired social worker/C.A.S.A worker and an awesome lady. That moment in my life, I believe, was the single most important moment of my life, the day I met Nancy.

Previous to her arrival into my life, I had known only pain, neglect, and suffering, but she showed me that there is a lot of good in this world. Gave me a reason to want to live. When I gotten taken away from my mom and dad and placed into foster care I was finally re-united with my sister Laura, and I hadn't seen her since she got taken away. It was great, this feeling I had, but it was good. Nancy had a friend name Susie, and Nancy and Susie would come once a week to take me and Laura out to dinner, the movies, a park, or where-ever, and we had the chance to learn to be kids again, something completely foreign to me then. Nancy taught me right from wrong, manners, etiquette at the table and in fancy places, and other things that helped me become the absolutely charming young woman I am today. Because she loved me, I was able to learn how to love in return, and today even, I can't help but have a heart. So many small blessings she's given me, in such a short time.

I have known Nancy for eleven years but only had the pleasure of being her C.A.S.A kid for two of those. The little lessons I've learned from her had such a powerful imprint on my head and heart, that even years on the streets has hardly faded or dented. I found out about what had happened that fateful day I met my angel, but that is not important. What's important is that Nancy helped me see that my parents were sick, and that I shouldn't hate them, but love them more and pray for them, at a distance of course. She taught me how to forgive, a skill that has followed me even into C.Y.A. yes, and again I reiterate that I believe that day, moment, and event to be the moment that has shaped who I am today. Not entirely but pretty much half of who I am, a big place, actually.

Who am I? I am Brittany, I am Loca, I am me. Who is Brittany? Well, she is intelligent, charming, sociable, respectful, selfless, helpful, artistic, sporty, and forgiving. Who is Loca? Well, she is street smart, easy going, down for hers, respected, no-nonsense, suspicious, on her toes, money-minded, and a survivor. Put the two together and you come up with me. I'd like to think that in spite of all my short comings, I turned out pretty well, but it's myself I am talking about so I tend to be overly biased. Ha, ha I hoped all the readers of *The Beat* enjoyed reading this as much

continued on next page

continued from previous page

as I enjoyed writing it. It just tickles me to imagine what every individual might be thinking as they read my thought, gives me something to focus on. Ha, ha!

I'd like to close this with a few shout outs starting with one to the 150 crew for their talented and creative writing, I got one for the boys at the Youth Guidance Center B-5 unit. "Stay up and be good to Mrs. O'Neil. She great, take care of her." That's my message to the B-5 boys. One to Vincent Williams because I am in CYA too, so I can feel his pain, and because when I read some of his pieces, my heart breaks, and bleeds for him. "God bless you mijito, I have you in my dailies to the heavenly father, praying for your safety, salvation, and sanity. Be at peace with your life, and if it becomes too much, just offer it up to the lord. I promise, it won't hurt nothing to try it. One love." I have one for Ray Sanchez Jr. "God bless you, may you be serene

and tranquil in your chaotic environment. God bless your father, may he be healed of all his earthly ills, and when (if) the lord decides to take him soon, may he be welcomed with open arms at the heavenly gate. God bless your little princess, and may she be as beautiful and inspiring as her daddy's words. You are a wise and spirited writer, my friend. Keep writing to The Beat, I love to read your thoughts, I truly do." I have a shout out to a former Beat Within writer by the name of "Broken Glass," girl, if you ever read this, I was feeling them poems that were featured every week there for a while. Keep it up." My last shout out is to The Beat staff members, Dave and Mervyn. "Hi guys! Hope you like my piece!" With the utmost respect and sincerity,

A Dear John Letter

I wish that I could talk to you like you say I can.
You say you ain't a little boy, but I don't see you acting like a man.

You claim to be Mr. Honorable, but then I caught you in a lie,

If you're not happy let it be known,
I want you but I really don't need you by my side.
You're not the guy I thought you were, you switched up a lot,

It makes me wonder how we made it this far
When you tried to be some one that your not.

I know at first I played a lot of games,
But honey you put in your fair share,
Advice if you don't really love someone, don't say you do,

It's cruel to make 'em think you are.

You used to make me feel so special,
But now I see it was a plot to get in my pants,
Sorry, that's not my stilo, I ain't feeling that circumstance.

With or without you I'm an Oakland thug for life,
All I need in CYA is commissary, some kicks and my wife.

Maybe we can start over, this time end up as friends,
I do know one thang, I will never be your girl again.



Today I Feel...

Today I feel...
Forgotten, like I'm not good enough to be thought of.
Today I feel...
Alone, as if I've been forsaken.
Today I feel...
Abused, like my life don't count.
Today I feel...
Ignored, as if my thoughts are meaningless.
Tomorrow I'll feel...
Brand new, and start the day off with a smile.

It makes me wonder how we made it this far
When you tried to be some one that your not.

JUICY JEFF

Being a mother is a hard job because it goes unappreciated all too often. Mothers are expected to be nurturing to their children, but when they are, it seems like we aren't as grateful as we should be because it's what's expected. This next writer from a place unknown to us gives his mother some appreciation by writing a magnificent poem. And even though it's short, it's to the point and has the same effect as any long ode to a mother. Hopefully, he'll be able to get a hold of this issue so he can show his mother he got a poem about her published. We're sure it'll mean the world to her. Thanks for being such a great mother, mom. We need more people in the world like you.

Regretful!

Coming into this lonely world, not knowing what to do.
Looking to some other woman, and thinking it was you.
Scared and regretful, of all the things I said and done.
Looking to some other woman, hoping she was the one.
The one that took away all the pain,
The one that brushed away the clouds and all of the rain.
The one that gave me a mother's love.
The one as beautiful as a dove.
I will love you forever, with all of my heart.
No one will ever tear us apart.
Dedicated to my mom.

Youth of tomorrow, the future can kiss you all with soft, sweet lips or bite you all in the ass with sharp poisonous fangs! The future offers so much to you all! There is no need to be weak, nor be swallowed by life! Take hold of your individuality! Come to terms with your hearts and minds! You all can overcome your environments/ present situations!

check out the rest of Chantéll Price-Priest's BWO piece on page 42

